

*American
Furniture*

IN PENDLETON
HOUSE 



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CHRISTOPHER P. MONKHOUSE

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with the assistance of JOHN M. CARPENTER

Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design

Providence, Rhode Island • 1986

EXHIBITION DATES

*Cabinetmakers and Collectors: Colonial Furniture
and its Revival in Rhode Island*

October 3, 1986 – March 1, 1987

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FRONT COVER: John Goddard (att.), desk and bookcase, 1761
(catalogue no. 39)

BACK COVER: James Sharp, night stand and chair, 1841
(catalogue nos. 17, 133)

FRONTISPIECE: Selection of furniture from the Charles
Pendleton collection in the northeast parlor of Pendleton House
(catalogue nos. 110, 109, 77, 40, 11)

ENDPAPERS: Design based upon Prince of Wales feathers carved
by Charles Dowler as ornaments for door pediments in the front
hall of Pendleton's home at 72 Waterman Street (see fig. 44;
also p. 50)

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Foreword

WHEN STEPHEN METCALF promised Charles Pendleton shortly before his death in 1904 that the Rhode Island School of Design would publish a catalogue of his collection, Mr. Metcalf in effect established the precedent for such publications in this country. The outside cover of the Pendleton volume, a gold-embossed binding in Russian dark green leather (bound by Ralph Randolph Adams of New York City), in no way belied the inside, with its lighter green doublure facing a reverse of pale watered green silk. The text by Luke Vincent Lockwood and the sepia-tinted photographic illustrations were printed on Japanese vellum by the Literary Collector Press, with the explanatory notes in comfortable proximity to their respective plates. Numbering 124 pages with 103 illustrations and numerous details, the Pendleton catalogue was printed in a limited edition of 160 copies, of which 150 were for sale, the bound ones selling for \$150 each, or the equivalent of \$1,811 today.

An updated catalogue reflecting both the broader range of the RISD collection, and the advances in scholarship since Lockwood put pen to paper, has been envisioned at least since John Maxon undertook preliminary research at RISD in 1946 while a summer intern from Harvard University. During John Kirk's tenure as director of the Rhode Island Historical Society in the late 1960s, he served as guest curator for RISD's American furniture collection, at which time he compiled structural notes on individual pieces with an eye to publishing a new catalogue.

While the present catalogue is inevitably indebted to that of 1904, it is neither as limited in number of copies printed, nor as costly. Furthermore, the earlier publication served as a record of Pendleton's entire collection, and hence included not only his predominantly high-style 18th-century American furniture, but also English and Continental examples, along with English and Chinese ceramics, and some metalwork. Although the full range of Pendleton's collection is addressed in the introductory essay, only his American furniture has been included in this catalogue, and even that category has been whittled down because a number of Pendleton's pieces have proven to be over-restored or the product of later "marriages." In

addition, this catalogue records the growth of the collection since Pendleton's bequest of 1904, both in numbers and in scope; it now extends from the 17th to the 20th century and includes rural and urban examples.

The process begun by Maxon and Kirk took several steps forward when the senior member of the present team, with the assistance of a research grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, visited a number of private and public collections in 1978–79 for the purpose of locating and studying comparable examples. Therefore, thanks to all of these efforts, much information had found its way into the object files for the collection when the Henry Luce Foundation, Inc., and the Museum first began discussions in the early 1980s about the possibility of a project supported through the Luce Fund for Scholarship in American Art. Sensing that it was an opportune time for a new catalogue of the Museum's collection of American furniture, that foundation provided the funds for completing the research and photography, as well as for seeing it through to publication. Since then additional assistance towards covering production costs for the catalogue has come from Mr. and Mrs. George M. Kaufman and the Wunsch Americana Foundation.

While preparing the introductory essay and catalogue entries, the authors have benefited not only from earlier research, but also from new information made readily available to them by numerous friends and colleagues, of whom the following must be singled out for being especially generous: Morrison Heckscher, Robert St. George, Nino Scotti, Sara Steiner, Robert Trent, and Philip Zea. Others who have been most helpful include: Nelson Aldrich, Kenneth Ames, Henry Beckwith, Mrs. Esther Bergstrom, Gunnar Bergstrom, Edgar Bingham, Ronald Bourgeault, Michael Brown, Owen H. Burt, Ralph Carpenter, Richard Champlin, John Cherol, Clement Conger, Edward Cooke, Wendy Cooper, Philip Creer, Ann Croto, Abbott Lowell Cummings, Deborah Daniels, Allison Eckardt, Erica Ell, Robert Emlen, Nancy Evans, Dean Failey, Jonathan Fairbanks, Dean Fales, Daphne and Peter Farago, Michael Flanigan, the late Benno Forman, Donald Friary, Wendell Garrett, Beatrice Garvan, Gail Geisser, Katharine Goddard, John Hamilton, Charles Hammond, Henry Hawley, Philip Hayden, Norman Herreshoff, Connie Hershey, Benjamin Hewitt, Mrs. Berton Hill, Nancy Holst, William Hosley, Richard Howland, Karen Jessup, Brock Jobe, Phillip Johnston, Harmon Jordan, Patricia Kane, Mrs. Michael Kessler, Kathy Kottaridis, Kevin Lawton, Barbara Legg, Bernard and Dean Levy, Joseph and Robert Lionetti, Bertram and Nina Little, Ida Ballou Littlefield, Arthur and Israel Liverant, Stanton Loring, William Cushing Loring, Laura Luckey, Margaret MacDonald, Louis MacKeil, Mrs. Henry McNeil, Estise and Frank Mauran, Edgar Mayhew, Houghton Metcalf, Pauline Metcalf, Helen Hill Miller, Eleanore Monahan, Edward Money, the late Charles Montgomery, William

Morlock, Michael Moses, Robert Mower, Justine Munro, Russell Ward Nadeau, Jane and Richard Nylander, Joseph K. Ott, Carole Pace, Donald Peirce, Mrs. David Pierce, Samuel Pennington, Gladys Porter, Roger Potter, Sumpter Priddy, Ruth Quattlebaum, Bradford Rauschenberg, Ellie Reichlin, Marguerite Riordan, Nathaniel Robertson, Rodris Roth, Albert Sack, Frances Safford, Pat Sherman, Sarah Sherrill, Elizabeth Morris Smith, Peter Spang, Laura Sprague, Kevin Stayton, Patricia Tice, the late John Walton, Gerald Ward, John Watkins, Dale Wheary, Martin Wunsch, and Nina Zannieri.

In addition to research, the collection required a certain amount of conservation in order for the pieces to look their best when photographed by Richard Cheek and Robert Thornton. While initially undertaken by Robert Walker and the late Vincent Cerbone at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, the majority of pieces in more recent years have been conserved by David Mitchell, Douglas Schroeder, and Joseph Twichell, all working under the supervision of Robert Mussey at the SPNEA Conservation Center in Waltham, Massachusetts. Their work has been partially funded by grants through the 1985 Conservation Project Support of the Institute of Museum Services, as well as a most generous grant specifically earmarked for the Lisle six-shell desk and bookcase (cat. 39) from Mr. and Mrs. George M. Kaufman. With the support of the local chapter of the National Association of Watch and Clock Collectors, George Steiner has been able to put all the clocks on display in working order. R. Bruce Hoadley at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, provided wood analysis for several pieces in the catalogue. Others who have assisted in a number of significant ways include Alice Miles, Charlotte King, and Werner Leyh of Providence, and David Masterson and Albert Longo of Pawtucket.

As the original setting for the American furniture collection had undergone considerable change since Stephen Metcalf provided the funds for the erection of Pendleton House, it too required extensive restoration. After careful analysis of the painted interior decoration by Sara Chase and Morgan Phillips from the SPNEA Conservation Center, the walls and woodwork in Pendleton House have been returned to their original appearance. Many of Pendleton's lighting fixtures are now back in place, thanks to the combined efforts of William Sweeney of The Yankee Craftsman, Adolph DiSandro of Atlantic Electrical Contractors, Ltd., and the late Paul King, while the missing "Bohemian" glass panels in the hall lanterns have been painstakingly reproduced by William Huggins of Hartford. Another "missing" element, a wooden bust of George Washington, has been duplicated in plaster by Linda Thimann Dewing in order that it could once again grace one of the fireplace pediments. And finally, the South Carolina pine floors in the front hall of Pendleton House have been restored by Frank N. Gustafson & Sons, Inc., under the supervision of

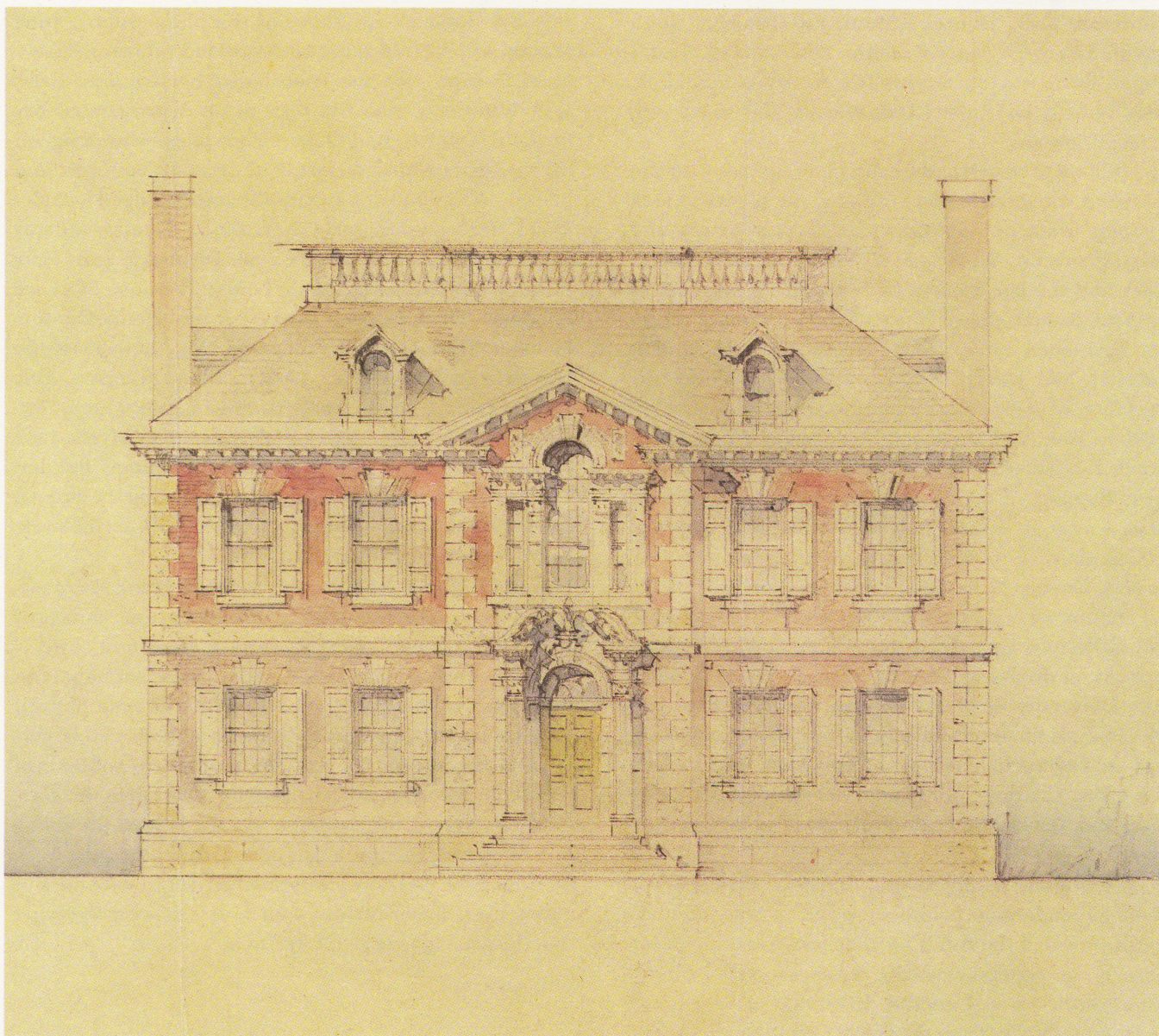
Irving Haynes Associates, thanks to a most generous and timely contribution by the Museum Associates.

A list of acknowledgements would be incomplete if it did not include all of those connected with the Museum and School who have contributed their time, expertise and energy to this project, and especially Robert Thornton, who has done a large share of the photography; June Massey, who has typed the catalogue and exhibition labels; Janet Phillips, who has contributed her editorial skills; Jean Waterman, who has once again demonstrated her financial acumen; and Gilbert Associates, who designed the catalogue. Other members of the staff, both past and present, who should be specifically acknowledged include: Tanya Barter, Elizabeth Casey, Linda Catano, Murray Danforth, Donald Dobson, Carole DiSandro, Jean Fain, Eleanor Fayerweather, Mary Louise Fazzano, Florence Friedman, Hank Gilpin, Susan Glasheen, Henry Gordon, Maureen Harper, Susan Anderson Hay, the late Valerie Hayden, Patricia Hurley Jarden, Diana Johnson, Eric Jones, Ellen Kaplowitz, Hedy Landman, Janice Libby, Patricia Loiko, the late Elmina Malloy, Hannah Myers, Jane Ohly, Stephen Ostrow, Joan Patota, Thomas Pautler, Thomas Ryan, Carol Sanderson, Homer Shirley, Ronnie Zakon Siegel, Louann Skorupa, Joan Slafsky, David Stark, Laura Stevens, and Carla Woodward.

Most of all, the authors wish to thank Frank Robinson, whose vision and support of this project have never flagged since he first arrived at the Museum as director in 1979.

Finally, no single individual has had a greater impact on the shape of this collection than Eliza Greene Metcalf Radeke. Inspired by Pendleton's collection formed largely in the 19th century, she was the most ardent collector of American furniture on behalf of the Museum in the 20th. With design students in mind, she augmented the collection to include furniture from the 17th century, the work of rural New England craftsmen, as well as examples of almost every major furniture form. It is thus highly fitting that this catalogue be dedicated to her.

CPM, TSM, JMC



Edmund Willson, preliminary design for Pendleton House on Benefit Street, attached to Pendleton's will, 1904. Watercolor and pencil on paper. (RISD Museum archives)

Cabinetmakers and Collectors: *Colonial Furniture and its Revival in Rhode Island*

Christopher P. Monkhouse

IN 1904 both the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and the Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, in Providence, acquired their first examples of American furniture from the Colonial period.¹ But while Boston obtained a single piece, Providence received an entire collection of 18th-century American and English furniture, ceramics, glass, and metalwork from the bequest of Charles Leonard Pendleton (1846-1904). In accord with the conditions of Pendleton's magnificent and unprecedented gift, RISD published in 1904 the first and most lavish catalogue ever devoted to a single collection of American and English decorative arts.² Two years later, RISD opened Pendleton House, this country's first museum wing dedicated to the exhibition of American decorative arts. Thus the RISD Museum became a leader in the interpretation and display of the decorative arts in the United States.

In 1933 a French social historian from Dijon – operating on the common belief that Massachusetts was the cradle of most things historical and cultural in New England, and assuming the Pendleton collection must be in that state – wrote to the *Boston Evening Transcript* for details. The following reply appeared in that paper's queries column on July 1, 1933:

There is, to our knowledge, no Pendleton collection in this State. What was possibly meant is the famous collection of early American furniture given to the Rhode Island School of Design in 1904 by Mr. Charles L. Pendleton, giving that institution the nucleus for one of the finest American collections and also one of the pioneer displays of such work. In 1906 the collection was installed in a Georgian mansion, fireproofed, but erected with every attention to historical accuracy. In this it was one of the pioneer movements in the modern trend of museum display, with realistic backgrounds. The building was of similar plan to the eighteenth century house in which Mr. Pendleton had lived, thus allowing his collection to be placed in accordance with his ideal – which was to restore the visual concept of such a home as a Rhode Island gentleman of wealth and culture living in the last quarter of the eighteenth century might have owned. There are a great many other larger collections now accessible to the public, such as the American wing of the Metropolitan Museum, the decorative arts wings of the Boston and Philadelphia museums, but none have better claims to being the oldest devoted exclusively to this purpose.

In order to appreciate the special circumstances which contributed to the creation of the Pendleton collection in Providence, as well as its eventual donation to the RISD Museum, it is necessary to look more closely at the history of 19th-century collecting in general, and Charles Pendleton's role as a collector and dealer in particular.

THE RAGE FOR ANTIQUES IN THE 1840S

It may not be by chance that Charles Pendleton's birth occurred in the decade which witnessed the rise of antique collecting in this country. At the outset of the decade, William Henry Harrison's presidential campaign gave a significant boost to the rediscovery of Colonial American decorative arts. Harrison and his Whig supporters cast his opponent, the incumbent Democratic President Martin Van Buren, in the role of "Caesar" who had transformed the White House at great public expense into a "palace."³ By contrast, Harrison styled himself the candidate of the common man, with his apparent fondness for hard cider – rather than Van Buren's taste for champagne – and his modest way of life in a log cabin on his farm in Ohio. To give this rustic profile greater visibility, Harrison's supporters erected log cabins throughout the country as campaign headquarters for their candidate, and encouraged public participation through the loan of old-fashioned objects expressive of a simpler age. Providence Whigs may not only have been the first to erect a log cabin in New England, as suggested at the time, but also the first to stage a loan exhibition of Colonial decorative arts within, thereby anticipating the New England Kitchen display at the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition by thirty-six years. The *Providence Journal*, conveniently located next door to the log cabin (fig.1), published the following description of it on July 7, 1840: "The Log Cabin is quite a museum of

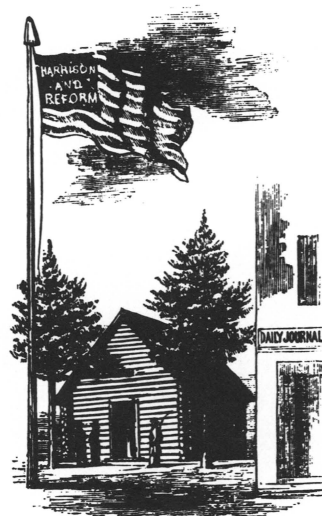


Fig.1
Detail of sheet music for *Harrison Song and Chorus*, 1840.
(Courtesy of the American Antiquarian Society)

curiosities, particularly of relics associated with the early history of the country, and of articles interesting from their antiquity.”⁴ Among the articles shown in the Log Cabin were an “Old Clock,” (over one hundred years old) suspended over the doorway,⁵ and “a specimen of a tea set, which has been in use over a hundred years.”⁶

The tea set could have been lent by Anne Allen Ives (1810–1884), the pioneer collector of pottery and porcelain in Providence. Having begun her collection in 1820 when only ten years old, Mrs. Ives had become a serious collector by 1840.⁷ Her quest was easily satisfied by having ready access to the best cupboards in town, beginning with that of her father, Sullivan Dorr, one of the great China Trade merchants who appropriately contributed Chinese Export porcelain, as did her in-laws, the descendants of Nicholas Brown. The RISD Museum received a portion of Mrs. Ives’s collection in the 1909 bequest of her daughter, Hope Brown Russell. The rest remains in the possession of the family.

In true antiquarian fashion, Mrs. Ives carefully recorded all the information gleaned from the donors on labels, which in many instances are still attached to the pieces in her collection. The label information ranges from “Bought in Greenwich, R.I./of Nobody for almost nothing, Age unknown” on a Chinese Export bowl, to the following note on a pottery oil lamp: “Presented by Wm. Binney, Mr. Horace Binney having brought it from Italy – it came from the tomb of Caesar – 1845.” Almost without exception Mrs. Ives’s labels from her early collecting days reveal an interest in association and age – the more famous the name and the more remote the date, the better – and virtually no concern for matters of technique, style, decoration, or maker. By contrast, when Charles Pendleton collected ceramics and furniture between 1880 and 1904, he rarely recorded the provenance of a piece. Out of his vast collection, only one of his Chinese Export plates bears a label noting that it belonged to Stephen Hopkins, a signer of the Declaration of Independence, while in his will he noted that a pair of Chinese Export urns and tea caddy had belonged to Governor James Fenner of Rhode Island. Instead he demonstrated a far greater concern for pattern and color and their close correspondence with his furniture. In other words, by the time Pendleton began collecting decorative arts, design had become more important than descent.

Anne Allen Ives’s fondness for collecting pottery and porcelain was apparently not unusual at the time, to judge from an article reprinted from the *Boston Transcript* in the *Providence Journal* on June 18, 1845 and titled “The Rage for the Antique, or Modern Parlor Decorations.” Prompted by an auction sale in London of ceramics which brought very high prices, the account recorded that “much of the desire for these costly articles of vertu is introduced from abroad, by travelled republicans who ape the fashions of the English nobility.” It then went on to report:

At a late *recherché* sale in London which was attended by the Duke of Devonshire, Earl of Lonsdale, Lord Mahon, Baron Rothschild, &c., the articles of Porcelain, Dresden, and Sevres China fetched surprisingly large sums; for instance, a French cup and saucer, in porcelain, £2 15s; in Dresden, a jar and cover of open work, £9 5s, and in Sevres a pair of small cups and saucers, £5 5s...

That’s a caution for husbands who have wives afflicted with the penchant for old China! If the rage increases, the purse set aside for family expenses will soon become exhausted at auction sales, and the modern *parlor* will look more and more like a bazaar for merchandise. (p. 1)

Continuing on the subject of antique collecting, the *Journal* ran an editorial on the following page which focused on Providence as a center for making as well as collecting old furniture from the days of the Pilgrims and Roger Williams. The editorial was thought of sufficient interest to be reprinted in the *Portland Transcript* on August 2, 1845.⁸ As the editorial so clearly establishes Providence as a significant source in the 1840s for old and reproduction furniture, it is worth quoting here at length:

We publish, on the outside of to-day’s paper, an article from the *Boston Transcript*, on the Rage for the Antique, which prevails in that city almost as generally as in Providence; we say almost, for we believe that Providence is entitled to the preeminence in this respect. It is some years since the lovers of the antique, in plate and furniture, commenced their collections in this city, and the number of collectors has increased to a surprising extent. Not only have all the old things in Providence been taken down from the garrets and, after passing through the hands of the upholsterer, placed in parlors, but Newport and old Narragansett have been ransacked, much to the displeasure of our friend Mr. Updike, who declares that all such venerable relics of the olden time should be sacredly preserved in the mansions which they originally embellished, and who himself possesses some of the most valuable and elegant specimens of them. The spoils which have been brought from the Southern portions of the State to Providence should furnish a hotel. As may readily be supposed, there is great variety in the antique furniture which has thus been seized upon and made to renew its age, and great difference in the degree of antiquity claimed for different articles; but fashion, which regulates everything, for a long time held the *Mayflower* furniture in the highest estimation, and it is almost beyond calculation the number of chairs and tables and sofas ‘that came over in the *Mayflower*,’ which are scattered through the houses of our city. Nobody, with any pretensions to fashion, but has at least a chest of drawers that came over in the pilgrim vessel; and it requires a bolder man than we are to express any doubt of their genuineness, in presence of their fair possessors. We know it is generally supposed that the *Mayflower* was a small vessel. Nothing could be a greater mistake; the *Mayflower* was at least a fleet. There are chairs enough in Providence that came over in that vessel to load a seventy four [fig. 2]. But everything has its day. The *Mayflower* furniture is beginning to be rather common; and Roger Williams’ furniture is at present most in demand. An ingenious mechanic, who has made a great deal of *Mayflower* furniture, informs us that articles warranted to have been in the family of Roger Williams are decidedly preferred at present. He has made four chairs and one table of this latter description, and he did us the honor to ask our opinion upon cutting down a four-foot bed-

stead – rather an unsaleable article, – into the first bedstead that Roger Williams slept upon after his landing at Whatcheer. We suggested that it would hardly ‘do’ at present: but he says we have no idea of the enlightened interest which the ladies take in everything antique, and he feels quite certain that he could sell it at a handsome price, especially if he adds a little carving to one corner and breaks off the top of one of the posts. (p. 2)

The editorial ends by concluding that women could do far worse with their time and money than spend them on acquiring antique furniture, especially as the money “goes to decayed families, often aged women, whose respectability has survived their prosperity.” In 1977, when the *Providence Sunday Journal* published an illustrated article in the magazine section on a fake Brewster chair made on the outskirts of Providence in the late 1960s, and later sold to the Henry Ford Museum, the newspaper was simply updating a story it had already told in 1845.⁹

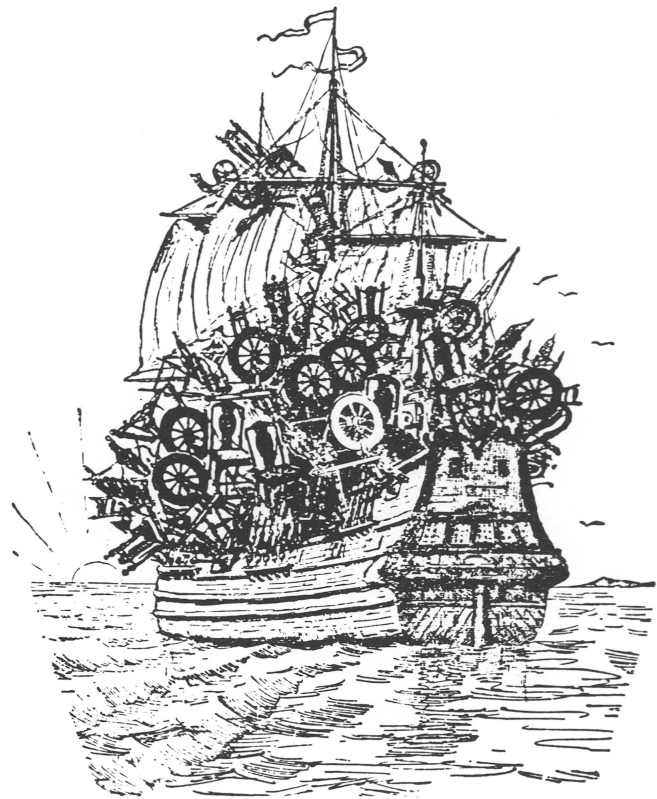
The passion for antique chairs can be partly attributed to Nathaniel Hawthorne’s historical narrative for children about Puritan New England titled *Grandfather’s Chair*, published in 1841. Hawthorne uses an elaborately carved high-back 17th-century armchair as his vehicle for introducing a series of historical personages from 1630 to 1780. Hawthorne stated that the idea of using an old armchair as the central character came from his spinster second cousin, Suzy Ingersoll of Salem, who one day pointed out an ancient chair by her fireplace: “You can make a biographic sketch of each old Puritan who became in succession the owner of the chair.”¹⁰ She in turn may have been inspired by a song written by Eliza Cook and published in 1840 titled *The Old Armchair*. But regardless of where the idea came from, the fireside chair was ideally suited to Hawthorne’s needs, or to quote from his preface to *Grandfather’s Chair*:

There is certainly no method by which the shadowy outlines of departed men and women can be made to assume the hues of life more effectually than by connecting their images with the substantial and homely reality of a fireside chair. It causes us to feel at once that these characters of history had a private and familiar existence, and were not wholly contained within that cold array of outward action which we are compelled to receive as the adequate representation of their lives. If this impression can be given, much is accomplished.¹¹

Early repercussions from Hawthorne’s historical tale were recorded in Portland’s *Daily Eastern Argus* on March 24, 1843, in an article titled “The Old Chair Mania” and signed by “Cicely Homespun”:

In the year 1842, there prevailed a sort of epidemic, styled *the old chair mania*. It was confined principally to what are called the higher classes of people, particularly Ladies. It raged for a few months to such an alarming extent that great fears were entertained among those not so affected, that not one relic of antiquity would be suffered to remain in their possession. Market men, Pedlars and errand boys, were requested to join in the hue and cry after old chairs. Garrets were ransacked *with* and *without* permission, Gentlemen’s offices visited by these ladies

THIS GIDDY GLOBE



THE MAYFLOWER

Fig. 2

“The Mayflower,” from Oliver Herford, *This Giddy Globe* (New York, 1919). First published as cover of the Columbus Day issue of *Life Magazine*, 1883.

of high degree, who at any other time would not bestow a glance upon their occupants. The usual salutation of 'how do you do;' &c., were exchanged among these ladies for 'well, have you received that old chair the Pedlar promised you? Mine is at Mr. such a one's to be repaired, let us go and buy some pieces of brocade for the cushions, will you?' and off they start still pursuing their mad career. And even the good, industrious people in the country, were not suffered to remain in quiet during this mania. Travelling vehicles – from the barouche to private carriages of every description were seen standing at the doors of Farm Houses, while their owners were hunting about in search of old chairs, taking the good ladies from their churns and other domestic avocations, to show their family relics, to these insatiable searchers for the *antique*.¹²

In the very year *Grandfather's Chair* was published, John Bray gave the Rev. Abraham Pierson's joined great chair to Yale, at which time it became the official chair of its president.¹³ And it may not be merely coincidental that other ancient chairs found their way to colleges and universities in the 1840s. For example, in 1848 an armchair with leather seat and back was presented to Brown University for the use of its president by Samuel Hopkins Smith, who noted that it had originally been intended for a Spanish West Indies governor before being seized by an American ship and subsequently given to the donor's ancestor, Stephen Hopkins, in the 1760s.¹⁴ A similar Spanish chair, but without arms, was given about this time to Trinity College in Hartford, Connecticut, by Thomas Winthrop Coit, to whom it had descended from Governor Joseph Wanton of Rhode Island. But as a college president's chair had to have arms, Trinity did not adopt the Wanton chair for that purpose, using instead a high-backed 18th-century Windsor armchair.¹⁵

Museums and historical societies also began to acquire antique chairs at this time. Daniel Wadsworth presented one of the Wyllis family armchairs with caned seat and back to the Connecticut Historical Society in 1844, along with six reproductions, reserving another six for the Wadsworth Atheneum (cat. 130). When Wadsworth commissioned those dozen reproductions around 1840, he turned to the New York City chairmaker Smith Ely, suggesting that Hartford had nobody at that time capable of doing the work, quite unlike the situation then prevailing in Providence. The first furniture to enter the Rhode Island Historical Society in Providence consisted of a set of six 18th-century mahogany Chippendale chairs presented about 1850 by the antiquarian Albert Gorton Greene, in whose family they had descended. In a similar spirit of ancestral chair worship, the RISD Museum, albeit at a much later date, acquired a turned side chair from the Mercy Congdon Brown family (cat. 83), and the Gardiner family turned great chair (cat. 84), both dating from the 17th century. Although it is not known if Charles Pendleton read *Grandfather's Chair*, he did read Hawthorne as an adult, because a copy of his *Mosses from an Old Manse* is still preserved among the volumes from his library kept at the



Fig. 3
Edward Lamson Henry, *The Old Clock on the Stairs*, 1868. Oil on canvas. (Courtesy of Shelburne Museum)

RISD Museum. Therefore, it is possible that contemporary literature played a part in inspiring Pendleton to collect antiques, as it did for so many others in the 19th century.

If the quest for Colonial furniture began in earnest with old chairs thanks to Hawthorne, then his good friend and Bowdoin College classmate, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, gave further impetus to the movement with the publication of his poem *The Old Clock on the Stairs* in 1843. At the time Longfellow wrote it, the tall-case clock in the parlor had almost been silenced forever by the less expensive and more efficient mahogany shelf clock with wooden works invented in 1814 by Eli Terry in Plymouth, Connecticut.¹⁶ Indeed, the arrival of the Terry clock may explain why tall-case clocks were relegated to the hall in the first half of the 19th century, if not banished altogether. For Longfellow, however, a hall could not have served his purposes better, because as a passageway it served as the ideal metaphor for the passage of time which he celebrates in his poem.

The artist Edward Lamson Henry responded to Longfellow's word picture by transferring it to canvas in a painting of the same title in 1868, based on an actual antique example in the Philadelphia home of the early collector of Colonial furniture, William Kulp (fig. 3). As if to leave no doubt about the source of his inspiration, Henry then sent a photograph of the picture to Longfellow, who in turn complimented him by saying that it was just the image he had in mind while writing the poem in 1843.¹⁷ In 1876, Longfellow's poem received further attention through the exhibition of Henry's *Old Clock on the Stairs* at the Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia, along with the publication that same year of the popular song written and set to music by Henry Clay Work, *Grandfather's Clock*, which begins: "My Grandfather's clock was too large for the shelf,/So it stood ninety years on the floor." From that date no hallway has been thought complete without an old-fashioned tall-case clock, and it has been universally referred to ever after as a "grandfather clock." None of the interest in grandfather clocks generated by Longfellow, Henry, and Work escaped the notice of Charles Pendleton, whose earliest recorded collecting and selling of antique furniture concerned clocks.

CHARLES PENDLETON AS ANTIQUE COLLECTOR AND DEALER

Despite Pendleton's prominence in the field of antique collecting, little is known about him as a private individual. The son of John and Rhoda Pendleton, he was born in 1846 in Westerly, Rhode Island, where his father was a prosperous farmer, working land which had been in his family for several generations. One of the few documents which have survived to throw light on the personal life of Charles Pendleton (fig. 4) is a book of daily expenditures he kept while he attended Phillips Academy in Andover, Massachusetts, between 1863 and 1865. In it



Fig. 4
Portrait of Charles L. Pendleton, ca. 1861. Ambrotype. (Gift of Fred Stuart Greene. 04.1466)

Pendleton mentions the existence of a stamp collection, and on March 19, 1864, records the fact that he sold it for \$2.25, thus initiating a pattern of collecting followed by selling. Only at the end of his life would Pendleton alter the pattern by bequeathing a large portion of his antique furniture and related decorative arts to the RISD Museum. Aside from the stamps, however, his activities at boarding school give no further hint of his future career as a collector and dealer. He appears to have been generally popular among his peers, who often referred to him by the nickname "Penny" or "Pen" in his autograph book; he also joined the prestigious Philomathean Society.¹⁸ He entered Yale College as a freshman in the fall of 1865.

Firsthand accounts of Pendleton's time at Yale are confined to one surviving letter written in his first term to his father. In it Pendleton asks for money to help defray the costs of joining a secret society.¹⁹ This paucity of material can partly be explained by the brevity of his stay at Yale. In the course of his second term the *Faculty Records* note on March 21, 1866: "Pendleton '69 on a/c of improper conduct in relation to a female shall be dismissed from College."

Such a traumatic event may explain why Pendleton kept his private life thereafter very much to himself. In fact, for the purpose of entertaining women as well as for gam-



Fig. 5
Card room in the apartment of Charles Pendleton, 174 West 58th Street, New York City, ca. 1900. (Courtesy of the Margaret Woodbury Strong Museum, Rochester)

bling he would eventually maintain a *pied-à-terre* in New York City (fig. 5), well removed from the prying eyes of his neighbors in Providence, which served as his principal residence beginning in 1880. Eben Howard Gay, a budding furniture collector and financier who had an office in Providence at the beginning of the 20th century, gives a good idea of how successful Pendleton was in keeping a lid on his private life. In Gay's quasi-autobiographical novel titled *A Chippendale Romance*, published in 1915 in a limited edition of 1,000 copies, he includes the following portrait of Pendleton, whose name has been changed to "Remington":

He finally appeared, a man of middle age and serious aspect, the ferret-like nose of the antiquarian, and a sonorous voice whose tones deepened into thrilling vibrations when discoursing upon his pet hobby. I have since heard vague rumors of a disappointed romance having come into his life, that left its shadow upon him, and perhaps caused the sombre mien that he habitually wore. There was gossip that he was in the habit of playing the races, and taking even longer chances in rooms devoted to the purpose; but whatever his private life may have been, his love of the beautiful was as sincere as his taste was refined and discriminating. (p. 53)

Despite his dismissal from Yale, Pendleton proceeded to study law, beginning in the office of the Providence firm of Thurston, Ripley & Co. in 1867, and then taking his law degree from the University of Albany in 1869.²⁰ Although it may never be known how actively Pendleton pursued his law practice, the preparation it involved certainly served him well when he came to collect antique furniture, given its emphasis on historical research, attention to detail, and good critical judgment. In fact, before courses in American decorative arts started to be given by R.T.H. Halsey at St. John's College in Annapolis in the late 1920s, and by John Marshall Phillips at Yale in the 1930s, the study of law often seems to have served as a valuable preparation for many collectors of American antiques.²¹ Aside from Pendleton, Eugene Bolles, Alphonso T. Clearwater, George Dudley Seymour, Luke Vincent Lockwood, Francis P. Garvan, Henry N. Flynt, and Cornelius C. Moore all took law degrees before beginning their collecting careers. The usefulness of a legal background has been memorably acknowledged by Francis Garvan: "I had eight years in the District Attorney's office and I try every piece as I would a murderer."²²

The decade of the 1870s brought the quest for antique furniture to an even more frenzied pitch in the wake of the 1876 Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia, and the various celebrations leading up to it and spinning off from it. While all of them invariably included displays of Colonial artifacts, none received better coverage and had greater impact on popular taste than Philadelphia's New England Kitchen of 1776.²³ As already noted, it was housed in a log cabin (fig. 6) similar to the one erected in Providence in 1840 as part of the William Henry Harrison campaign. And as in the past, the objects in the New England Kitchen were selected with an eye to their age and association. They included a desk that John Alden may have originally owned, and a flax wheel that dated back 200 years and may possibly have been the one Priscilla Mullins was seated at when Alden asked for her hand on behalf of Captain Miles Standish. That latter event was of particular interest, having recently been used as the central theme of Longfellow's highly popular poem of 1858, *The Courtship of Miles Standish*, which like his *Old Clock on the Stairs* of 1843, and Hawthorne's *Grandfather's Chair* of 1841, heightened people's appreciation of antiques.²⁴ The emphasis on historical association rather than aesthetics, however, was beginning to be rethought in the 1870s, with artists also playing a particularly influential role.

The architect and furniture historian Alvin Crocker Nye wrote in the *Architectural Record* in 1897 that artists had been among the first to rediscover and collect antique furniture for its aesthetic qualities:

Among those who knew how bad in every respect was the furniture of that period [the 1870s] were the artists, architects, and those who from observation abroad had some artistic instinct. It was they who first of all gathered from the garret or woodshed some old chair, table or desk which, after cleaning, repairing and polishing, was placed in their rooms to do service.

Why did they do this? Why did they seem so pleased at bringing to light an article that had been discarded as old-fashioned? In the first place, they saw a much better article than the average workmanship of the time produced. It was, perhaps, not so elaborate, but the quality of material, design, workmanship and its truthful simplicity made it appear much more elegant than the showy sham next to it. Whenever an opportunity presented itself such furniture was purchased, till often the whole studio became furnished with it. A studio or office thus furnished, together with the odds and ends usually found hanging about in a place of that kind, certainly gives a pleasing impression as one enters, and this impression is not always destroyed by familiarity. Then the amateur began to imitate the artist...²⁵

Edward Lamson Henry was one of the first artists to collect antiques, beginning in the late 1860s. The objects he acquired in Philadelphia and Newport not only furnished his Tenth Street studio in New York City, and his country retreat at Cragmoor, New York, but also served as props for his genre paintings of 18th-century life, which became something of a specialty for him. His *Old Clock on the Stairs* (fig. 3) of 1868, exhibited at Philadelphia in 1876, is one example of this as is his painting of an 18th-century Philadelphia drawing room executed in 1870, and formerly in



Fig. 6
Interior view of the New England Kitchen at the Centennial Exposition, Philadelphia, 1876, from *Frank Leslie's Historical Register of the United States Centennial Exposition* (New York, 1877).

the Maxim Karolik collection.²⁶ Both these pictures suggested to viewers how rooms had been furnished in the Colonial period, and therefore how they should be furnished again in the Colonial Revival. In the case of the first picture, the historical precedent went back no further than the advent of the Eli Terry shelf clock in 1814. In his painting of the drawing room, Henry took certain liberties by introducing a piece of case furniture from the bedroom, with the result that a Philadelphia Chippendale highboy stands to the right of the arched entrance. The charm of the pictures, however, more than compensated for their historical shortcomings, and a collector such as Pendleton easily succumbed to the notion of placing one or more grandfather clocks in his hall, along with chamber tables or lowboys, which he used as pier tables (fig. 44).

An even more extreme example of artistic license can be found in the drawing-room scene titled *A Quilting Bee*, painted by a contemporary of Henry's, H.W. Peirce, and copyrighted in 1876. It not only includes a Chippendale highboy, but also in the foreground a basin stand transformed into a work table (fig. 7). With so much conflicting evidence available at the time of the Centennial regarding antique furniture and period room arrangements, there is little wonder that historians are still trying to sort it out in terms of what is real and what is revival.

As artists held open house in their studios on a regular basis in the second half of the 19th century to compensate for the lack of galleries and museums in which to exhibit their work, the studio furnishings often had as much



Fig. 8
The studio of James Wells Champney, Deerfield Massachusetts, ca. 1879. Illustrated in S.G.W. Benjamin, *Our American Artists* (Boston, 1881).

impact on the taste of their patrons as the pictures. Another of E.L. Henry's contemporaries who furnished his studio with antiques was James Wells Champney of New York City and Deerfield, Massachusetts. An interior view of his Deerfield studio in the late 1870s shows a truncated Chippendale highboy and a Hepplewhite sideboard (fig. 8). By 1879 the latter had made its way from the studio into the main house where it appears in a painting of that date titled *Second Childhood*.²⁷ By 1890 the Hepplewhite sideboard had moved again, this time to Champ-



Fig. 7
Photograph after H.W. Peirce, *A Quilting Bee in the Olden Time*, 1876.

ney's New York studio, where it occupied a prominent position in the entrance hall. This transferral of antique furniture from studio to country house to city residence during the last three decades of the 19th century repeated itself time and again as such objects became increasingly fashionable because they were "old fashioned."

A painting by Edward Lamson Henry of two people examining a collection of china housed in a Chippendale corner cupboard, with the title *Why, this is Spode!*, appears as an illustration in *The House Beautiful* of 1878.²⁸ Written by the influential art critic and tastemaker, Clarence Cook, it served as an apologia for the Aesthetic Movement in America. As the inclusion of a Henry painting among the illustrations might suggest, the author devotes much of his text to extolling the virtues of antique furniture from the standpoint of an artist, and especially praises those pieces which unite the useful with the beautiful. The following passage is typical of Cook's point of view:

To the eye of one whose liking for our Revolutionary furniture is not a new thing, the charm of it consists, apart from its usefulness, which is evident to everybody, in the color given to it by age, and in the simplicity with which all its ornament is obtained. Its moldings are always good and quiet; just what is needed, and no more, to round an angle with elegance, and to catch the light agreeably, and whenever any carving is attempted, or paneling, there is a certain moderation in it that is very refreshing in these loud times. (p. 79)

While whetting his readers' appetites for Colonial furniture, Cook also appreciated that "everybody can't have a grandfather, and things that came over in the Mayflower..." For those "who have not drawn these prizes in life's lottery," Cook included the names of antique dealers in New York City, such as Hawkins, Drake, and Sypher.²⁹ Among Sypher's Rhode Island clients could be found the names of Anne Allen Ives, Thomas Mawney Potter, and Charles Pendleton.

While Mrs. Ives has already been mentioned as a keen collector of ceramics in the 1840s, Thomas Mawney Potter (1814–1890) of Kingston could be considered a serious collector of 18th-century furniture by the 1860s, and acquired about 1870 a block-and-shell desk and bookcase in Newport which may well be the one bequeathed to RISD by the Arthur Lises (cat. 39).³⁰ Like Mrs. Ives, Potter had the advantage of beginning his collecting career with inherited pieces, and then extended his net further and further afield as local sources dried up. Both had begun collecting with an eye to age and association. However, by the time they started to buy from professional antique dealers such as Sypher in New York in the 1870s, design and decoration had also become criteria which they used for making acquisitions. Whereas in the 1840s Mrs. Ives attached handwritten labels to her ceramics giving their family pedigree, in the 1870s she attached printed entries from auction catalogues describing rarity, related examples, and record of ownership by prominent collectors. As a further reflection of the more scholarly approach to col-

lecting antiques at the time of the Centennial, the first reference books to be written by Americans appeared: William Cowper Prime's *Pottery and Porcelain of All Times and All Nations*, and Charles Wyllis Elliott's *Pottery and Porcelain from Early Times Down to the Philadelphia Exhibition of 1876*, both published in 1878. Needless to say, Mrs. Ives owned both books, as did Charles Pendleton.

The first reference to Pendleton's buying antiques occurs at the Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia, where he purchased a "superb antique bronze vase," but little is known of his collecting endeavors for the rest of the decade.³¹ In 1881 he became Walter Durfee's silent partner for the sale of clocks under the name of "Durfee & Enches."³² Durfee had already been selling antique furniture in Providence since 1877, and from the beginning he had specialized in tall-case clocks, taking full advantage of the interest revived in them by Longfellow's poem. Beginning in 1880, a year before their partnership, he and Pendleton traveled to England in search of antiques, and they continued to go to England together until gambling debts forced Pendleton to withdraw his financial support in 1884. Even so, they remained close friends until Pendleton's death, at which time Durfee served as the executor of his estate.

The English trips of the early 1880s had a significant impact on the lives of both Walter Durfee and Charles Pendleton. Through them Durfee came into contact with certain manufacturers of clocks and cases who were more than willing to ship the parts to this country. Durfee then assembled them in Providence. When he added a bell chime recently patented in England (fig. 9), he enhanced the demand for hall clocks in America to such an extent that he has come to be considered "the father of the modern grandfather clock."³³ Furthermore, as Durfee frequently had to be in England to check on his sources of

Fig. 9
Printed billhead of Walter H. Durfee & Co. (RISD Museum archives)

supply – by 1902 he stated he had made nineteen round trips – he also served as a scout for antiques for Pendleton and several of his collecting friends. For example, Durfee may have liberated the R. Soden-Smith collection of English salt-glazed ceramics and Whieldon ware from the Victoria and Albert Museum, then called the South Kensington Museum, where it had been on loan since 1887. Back in Providence it was divided between Marsden Perry, Richard Canfield, George Palmer, and Charles Pendleton, with the lion's share going to the latter (figs. 5, 34).

Pendleton's trips to England with Durfee exposed him to elaborately carved mahogany furniture in the Rococo style which was then very popular with English collectors. In the course of the next twenty years he became so enamored of it that in 1915 Eben Howard Gay in his previously mentioned novel, *A Chippendale Romance*, portrayed him as one of the premier collectors in America of Chippendale furniture. Even more significantly for the RISD Museum, Pendleton also saw the John Jones collection of high-style 18th-century French furniture and related decorative arts shortly after it had been bequeathed to the Victoria and Albert Museum in 1882.³⁴

Until John Jones, a comprehensive collection of decorative arts had never been assembled from a single period and country with the intention of its ending up in a public museum by gift; hence, the Jones collection undoubtedly served as the seed for Pendleton's bequest to RISD. A copy of the guide to the Jones collection, published in the same year as the bequest, appears among the books in Pendleton's library. His fellow collector and friend George Palmer stated in a letter to Henry Waters of Salem as early as 1893 that he hoped his collection would end up in a museum, and his sentiments might well reflect those of Pendleton:

I, myself, am trying to get together fine specimens of eighteenth century furniture with the expectation that they may remain together in some public institution for the profit and pleasure of future generations. It seems to me that the old things which have come down to us from the first settlers in our country should be carefully gathered together and preserved in places where they may be studied advantageously by large numbers of people...³⁵

While the cream of Palmer's collection did find its way to the Metropolitan Museum in 1918, it was by purchase, not gift, as in the case of Pendleton.³⁶ Not until the teens and twenties was Pendleton's precedent followed by Judge Alphonso T. Clearwater, who placed his collection of early American silver at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. In 1930, Francis Garvan, on the occasion of his wedding anniversary, gave the best of his collection of American decorative arts to Yale University as the Mabel Brady Garvan Collection.³⁷

In addition to John Jones, the Providence art collector Henry Steere (1830–1889) appears to have had a significant impact on Pendleton and his bequest to RISD, as well as on the creation of the RISD Museum (fig. 10). As trea-

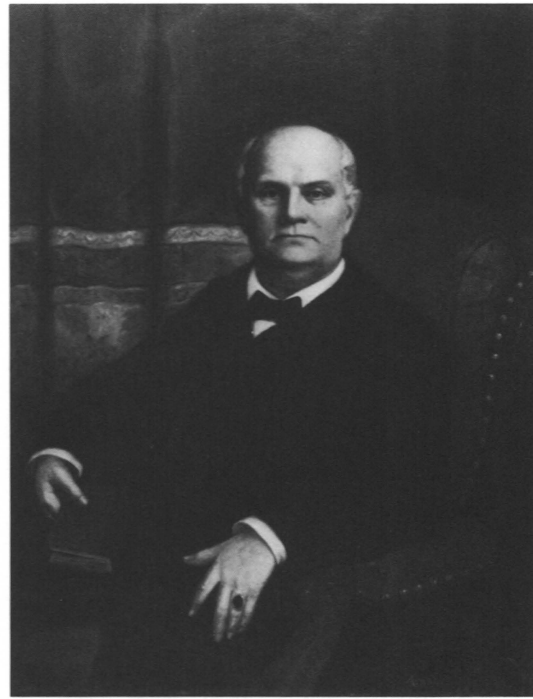


Fig. 10
John Nelson Arnold, *Portrait of Henry J. Steere*, 1889. Oil on canvas. (Courtesy of Steere House, Home for the Aged, Providence)

surer of the Wanskuck Company, Providence woolen manufacturers, Steere not only had a financial stake in a highly profitable company, but worked closely with its president, Jesse Metcalf, whose wife, Helen Adelia Rowe Metcalf, helped found the Rhode Island School of Design in 1877.³⁸ Upon Steere's death in 1889, Jesse Metcalf's five children received monetary bequests ranging from \$25,000 to \$50,000 each, suggesting that Steere, a bachelor, considered them part of his extended family.³⁹ Given such close ties, it can be assumed that the Metcalfs were well aware of his intention to establish an art museum in Providence to house his distinguished collection of American and European paintings and bronzes, which he had begun collecting in 1869.⁴⁰ Although Steere did not live long enough to carry out this plan, it doubtless served as a source of inspiration to the Metcalf family when they arranged for exhibition galleries to be incorporated into the first permanent home of the Rhode Island School of Design, erected on Waterman Street in 1893.

While the bulk of Henry Steere's art collection ornamented his Renaissance Revival residence in Providence at 101 Benefit Street (which he purchased in 1876),⁴¹ he opted for a simpler way of life at his country house built between 1884 and 1886 virtually next door to the Jesse Metcalfs at Nayatt Point in Barrington, Rhode Island.⁴² In keeping with its thoroughly Colonial Revival design, he showed a preference for Chippendale in furnishing the interiors, and had an 18th-century copy of Thomas Chippendale's *Gentleman and Cabinet-Maker's Director* in his

library for ready reference.⁴³ For professional help and advice, however, he turned to Charles Pendleton who by this time had become the local authority on antique furniture. Steere's name therefore appears among the clients listed in Pendleton's account book, and in turn Pendleton's name appears among the purchasers of Steere's "Ancient & Modern Household Furniture" sold at auction on April 17, 1890.⁴⁴

Henry Steere had engaged Edmund Willson (1856–1906) of the Providence architectural firm of Stone, Carpenter & Willson to design his Nayatt Point house; this doubtless provided Pendleton with his introduction to the architect whom he would select to design the permanent home for his collection at RISD twenty years later. Pendleton could not have helped but be impressed by Willson's thorough understanding of Colonial architecture, acquired during his youth in Salem, Massachusetts, and reinforced by his study of architecture as a student at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris between 1879 and 1881. In his Providence office Willson had access to an impressive library of 18th-century architectural pattern books which the senior partner, Alfred Stone, had been collecting since the 1870s.⁴⁵ Henry Steere also had a superb architectural library, rich in 18th-century treatises as well as the latest works on country-house architecture published in England and America, which meant that Willson had an informed and exacting client to please.⁴⁶ Therefore, it is not surprising that the house he designed for Steere is one of the earliest pure essays in the Colonial Revival style, rival-



Fig. 11
Nightingale-Brown House, 1791. 357 Benefit Street, Providence.
(Courtesy of the Nicholas Brown Foundation)

ing McKim, Mead & White's contemporaneous H.A.C. Taylor house in Newport.⁴⁷

For a model, Willson and Steere selected Providence's Nightingale-Brown house at 357 Benefit Street (fig. 11).⁴⁸ In adapting this urban mansion to a country setting, Willson remained remarkably loyal to the original, except that he duplicated the Benefit Street facade on the front and rear elevations, added a single-story columned porch along one side, and made the square portico circular (fig.



Fig. 12
Henry J. Steere House, 1884–86. Stone, Carpenter and Willson,
architects. Nayatt Point, Barrington, RI. (Jesse Metcalf Fund. 80.070)



Fig. 13
Front hall of the Nightingale-Brown House, 1883. (Courtesy of the Nicholas Brown Foundation)

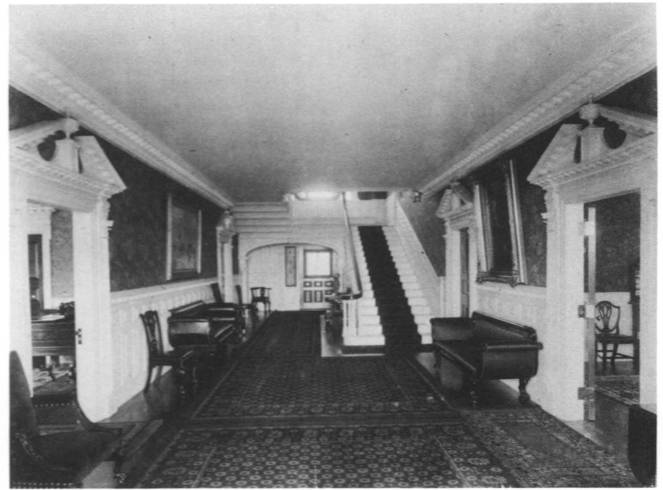


Fig. 14
Front hall of the Henry J. Steere House, ca. 1886. (Jesse Metcalf Fund. 80.070)



Fig. 15
Front parlor of the Nightingale-Brown House, 1883. (Courtesy of the Nicholas Brown Foundation)



Fig. 16
Front parlor of the Henry J. Steere House, ca. 1886. (Jesse Metcalf Fund. 80.070)

12). In response to a widespread concern for hygiene, he broadened the proportions of all the rooms to allow for a greater flow of light and air (figs. 13-16). Similar healthful signs can be seen in the replacement of wall-to-wall carpeting with highly polished wooden floors punctuated by Oriental scatter rugs for a touch of color and warmth. Willson had the woodwork painted a warm ivory throughout, and kept patterned wallpapers to a minimum. The deeply buttoned and fringed upholstery on the chairs gave way to carved wood, leather and hair cloth, while the heavy draperies virtually disappeared from the windows, thus eliminating places for dust and vermin to collect.

When Pendleton moved into 72 Waterman Street (fig. 39) in 1897, he took his cue from these interiors for the decoration and arrangement of his own (figs. 42, 44),

as would Willson when he faithfully replicated them at RISD between 1904 and 1906 (figs. 43, 45). But this more restrained and orderly approach to furnishing rooms, although implicit in Colonial interiors, was not always appreciated, as can be seen by the way a later owner of Steere's Nayatt Point house sacrificed the openness of the front hall, leaving not a square inch unfurnished (fig. 17).

Through Henry Steere, Pendleton may have obtained the patronage of another of Rhode Island's great manufacturers of woolen goods, Rowland Hazard of the Peace Dale Manufacturing Co. His initials, "R.H.2d" appear in Pendleton's account book beside the sale of an "oak claw & ball chair – carved." This transaction probably occurred about 1887 when Rowland Hazard was making alterations to Oakwoods, his country estate in Peace Dale.⁴⁹ Hazard's

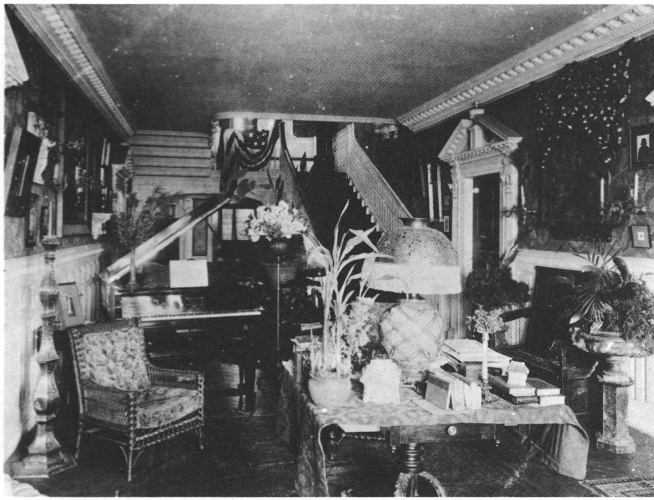


Fig. 17
Front hall of the Henry J. Steere House, as occupied by a later owner, ca. 1900. (Courtesy of the Barrington Historical Society)

son, Rowland Gibson Hazard, followed in his father's footsteps by engaging Pendleton to help with the furnishing of his Peace Dale residence, Holly House. Also an enlargement of an earlier house, its Tudorbethan facade and Colonial Revival interiors were designed by McKim, Mead & White between 1892 and 1893.⁵⁰ One piece of antique furniture eventually to be purchased for Holly House through Pendleton was a mahogany fall-front desk and bookcase made in Rhode Island at the very end of the 18th-century. Its provenance was so highly esteemed by Hazard that he had a brass plaque placed on the interior of the prospect door engraved with the following inscription:

This bookcase, once used by Chief Justice Tristram Burgess, was bought from the Burgess heirs by Chief Justice Charles S. Bradley and after his death was bought by C.L. Pendleton, who sold it to R.G. Hazard in March, 1901.⁵¹

Such prestigious clients as Steere and the Hazards attracted others from among the first families of Rhode Island. The auction in 1897 of "an extraordinary collection of ANTIQUE FURNITURE" belonging to Charles Pendleton found in attendance William Goddard, Mrs. R.H.I. Goddard, Mrs. Robert Ives Gammell, Mrs. Nelson W. Aldrich, Mrs. Harriet Brownell, and Mrs. Henry Pearce, all of whom according to the *Providence Journal* "secured valuable and rare pieces." The *Journal* also noted that "every piece was warranted to be a genuine antique and was sold absolutely without reserve, the reputation of Mr. Pendleton being an assurance of this."⁵²

While Pendleton's fondness for gambling occasionally hindered his buying and selling antiques, as in 1884 when he had to withdraw from his partnership with Walter Durfee, it also provided him with a valuable avenue for meeting rich collectors in need of his expertise. At the very center of the gambling world on both sides of the Atlantic at

the end of the 19th century was Richard Canfield (1855–1914) (fig. 18).⁵³ Although he started life as a poor boy from New Bedford, he began to improve his fortune through organizing gambling games on the street corners of Providence in the 1870s. He turned a six-month stay in prison in the latter half of 1885 to good advantage by becoming a voracious reader. He particularly enjoyed the novels of William Makepeace Thackeray, and through them came to embrace everything associated with the upper strata of 18th-century English society, including Chippendale furniture, as a sure way of being taken for a gentleman.⁵⁴ Once out of prison he began to collect antique furniture, an early reflection of which could be seen in his Madison Square Club at 22 West 26th Street in New York City.

When the Madison Square Club opened in May of 1888, with Delmonico's scarcely a hundred yards away, "the furnishings of the new place showed a dignified restraint that seemed at first to make it a poor imitation of the sumptuous places that Broadway had come to know. The Furniture was for the most part of the early American type rather than the combination monstrosities of Victorian art tortured out of late Empire."⁵⁵ Such furniture may not only reflect the influence of Thackeray, but also Charles Pendleton, who, according to Canfield's biographer, just about this time commenced to have "more to do with directing and possibly refining Mr. Canfield's art tastes than any other man."⁵⁶ Pendleton had a similar influence on the Providence financial wizard, Marsden Perry (1850–



Fig. 18
James Abbott McNeill Whistler, *Portrait of Richard Canfield*, 1903. Oil on canvas. (Private collection: photograph courtesy of the Photographic Archives of the National Gallery of Art, Washington)

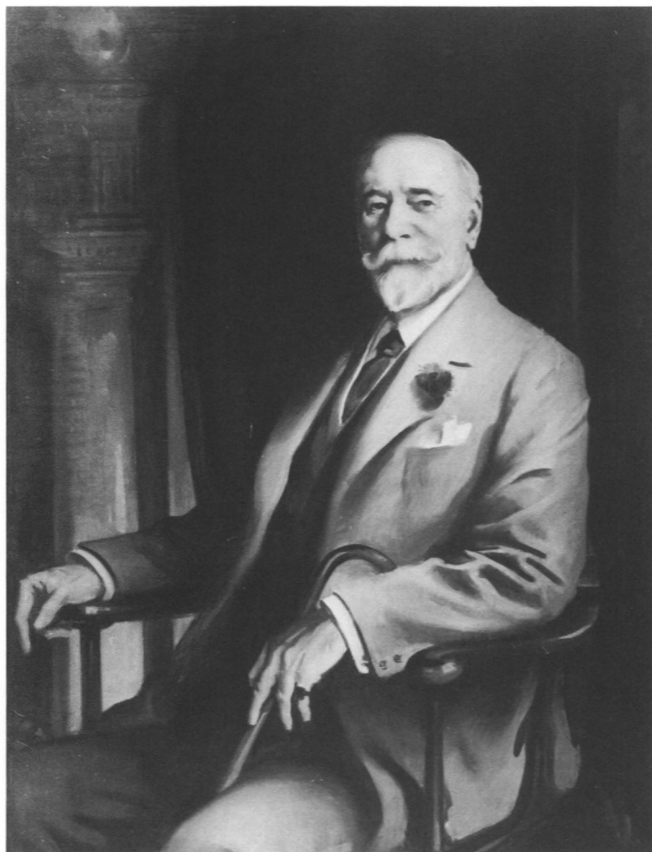


Fig. 19
John C. Johansen, *Portrait of Marsden J. Perry*, 1928. Oil on canvas.
(Courtesy of the Rhode Island Historical Society)

1935) (fig. 19), and the Norwich, Connecticut, manufacturer of quilts, George Palmer (1855-1934). These men also enjoyed gambling together, which combined with their interests in antique furniture, helped to create four strikingly similar collections.⁵⁷

Pendleton and Canfield often discussed the relative merits of English and Philadelphia cabinetmakers, with Canfield arguing the superiority of the former on the basis of the elaborate plates in Chippendale's *Director* and other 18th-century pattern books. Pendleton said he would agree if the more elaborate illustrations had been translated into actual furniture. Pendleton's lack of conviction served as a challenge to Canfield, who set out to vindicate his position through the acquisition of several pieces in England, beginning around 1892 with six "Pre-Director" side chairs purchased from R.W. Partridge of London (fig. 20).⁵⁸ Ultimately he was able to increase the set to a dozen, frequently paying fantastic prices for a single chair. Later Canfield acquired a large carved mahogany china cabinet in the form of a Chinese pagoda incorporating details from several plates in Chippendale (fig. 21). Purchased from Messrs. Falcke-Meyer in London, it apparently sustained much damage in shipping, and hence ended up being restored in the Providence cabinet shop of Morlock & Bayer, where it was photographed. When sold in the Marsden Perry sale in 1936, the cataloguer noted that "Mr. Pendleton offered him [Canfield] a very high sum for it upon its arrival in this country," in spite of the restoration work, and "regarded it as the finest example of its kind he had ever seen."⁵⁹

Another of Canfield's discoveries which derived from Chippendale's *Director* consisted of a pair of carved mahogany wall vitrines which he bought from Duveen Bros. in New York, and then proceeded to divide between Pendleton and himself (figs. 20, 22). All of Canfield's Chippendale-inspired pieces were sold to Marsden Perry upon his death in 1914 (fig. 21).⁶⁰ The excessive use of carved decoration on the pieces suggests that they are more indebted to the second half of the 19th century than the second half of the 18th century, either *in toto* or at least through "improvements" or extensive restoration.

Even by the 1830s the English had begun to reproduce designs after Chippendale, which would explain why his *Director* came to be reprinted during that decade for the first time since 1762. In the 1840s, an influx of cabinetmakers and carvers into this country, particularly from England and Germany, provided a group of craftsmen capable of executing similar work over here, and judging from the above-mentioned editorial published in the *Providence Journal* in 1845, some of those craftsmen set up shop in Providence.⁶¹ While all their names have yet to come to light, it is possible by the 1860s to identify some key personalities who dominated the field of reproduction and restoration cabinet work in Providence for the remainder of the 19th century, as well as the first part of the 20th cen-

tury, beginning with Charles Dowler.

The need for gunmakers during the Civil War initially drew Charles Dowler to Providence from Birmingham, England in 1863.⁶² Once the war had ended, however, he emphasized his talents as a carver and ornamental designer for furniture and houses in the Providence directories from 1866 until 1924. On the basis of a series of elaborately carved mantelpieces executed by him in 1874 for Alfred Reed, Jr.'s country estate in East Greenwich, Rhode Island, known as Cedar Hill,⁶³ not to mention naturalistic casts of leaves for drawing classes at RISD in 1878,⁶⁴ it is obvious he could carve almost anything, and apparently made carved wooden pedimental busts for furniture and architecture his specialty.

For reproduction and restoration cabinet work, German craftsmen dominated the Providence scene. William Morlock arrived in Providence in 1863, the same year as Dowler, having come from Württemberg by way of New York City in the late 1850s.⁶⁵ Initially he worked for the cabinetmaking firm of Nickel & Suffa for six years, then went into various partnerships of his own, with that of Morlock & Bayer surviving the longest (1877-1908). The firm specialized in interior woodworking, and as already noted, restored a Chinese Chippendale cabinet for Richard Canfield about 1900 (fig. 21). In addition there was



Fig. 22
A corner of the library in the home of Charles Pendleton, 72 Waterman Street, Providence, ca. 1900. (RISD Museum archives)



Fig. 20
View of the drawing room in Richard Canfield's townhouse and casino at 5 East 44th Street, New York City, ca. 1900. (Courtesy of the Margaret Woodbury Strong Museum, Rochester)



Fig. 21
View of parlor at the John Brown House, 52 Power Street, Providence, when occupied by Marsden J. Perry, 1928. (Illustrated in *Town and Country*, January 18, 1929)

R. H. BREITENSTEIN & SON,
CABINET MAKERS
 —AND—
REPAIRERS.
 DEALERS IN ANTIQUE FURNITURE,
 A SPECIALTY.
FIRST-CLASS UPHOLSTERING.
 80 Richmond St., Providence, R. I.
 All Orders Promptly Attended to.



Fig. 23
 Advertisement for R. H. Breitenstein & Son, from the Providence City Directory, 1887.

Rudolph Breitenstein, who first offered his cabinetmaking services in Providence in 1869, and beginning in the city directory of 1882 specifically states, “particular attention given to antique furniture repairing, varnishing, and upholstering” (fig. 23). His son Adolph continued to restore antique furniture in Providence until 1945, making the Breitenstein firm one of the longest-lived of all the local firms concerned with this line of work.⁶⁶

A bill from Walter Durfee (fig. 9) indicates that Charles Dowler, Morlock & Bayer, and R.H. Breitenstein & Son worked together on the completion of a pair of elaborately carved settees, one of which can be seen in a photograph of the interior of Charles Dowler’s shop just after he had finished carving its surface (fig. 24). Charles Pendleton had commissioned the two settees shortly before his death, as exact copies of one in his collection (fig. 42) which, along with six matching side chairs, he seems to have valued more highly than anything else in his collection.



Fig. 24
 Studio of Charles Dowler, 47 Washington Street, Providence, ca. 1904, with one of a pair of settees in the foreground commissioned by Pendleton as replicas of one in his collection. (Courtesy of John R. Watkins)

The settee and chairs were acquired at different times, much in the same way that Canfield had assembled his set of twelve "Pre-Director" Chippendale chairs. Indeed, Pendleton may have intended to rival, if not surpass, that set with this one. It was not only thought to have been produced in the shop of Thomas Chippendale, but actually carved by Grinling Gibbons (an unlikely event, since the latter died in 1721 when Chippendale was only three years old).⁶⁷ In order to obtain the settee, which was supposed to have stood in the hall of the Burlington Hotel near Green Park in London from time immemorial, Duveen Bros. acting on behalf of Pendleton had to agree "that an exact reproduction be made to take its place."⁶⁸ Pendleton could never acquire the accompanying armchairs because one of them had been snatched up by a rival collector, George Palmer, along with an additional side chair, while the other armchair was already in the possession of Sir John Soane's Museum in London (fig. 25). At least this is what Pendleton thought, as did the Metropolitan Museum in 1918 when they published Palmer's armchair in their *Bulletin* at the time they purchased it from him, along with sixty-six other pieces of high-style 18th-century English and American furniture.⁶⁹

The armchair owned by Sir John Soane had been on display ever since his house museum opened its doors to the public in 1837. Therefore, cabinetmakers gained access to that chair just at the time there was renewed interest in English Rococo furniture, and its elaborately carved surface would have proved to be particularly attractive at that time. While the Soane armchair is still considered to date from the second quarter of the 18th century, all the related examples which have come to light appear to be 19th-century copies. And although not noted in the earlier literature, Pendleton's settee and six side chairs and Palmer's armchair and additional side chair differ from the Soane chair in that the latter does not have a cherub's head carved on its serpentine seat rail. Its appearance on the others suggests the "gilding of the lily" which in Victorian times resulted from *horror vacui*, or simply a marked distaste for unadorned surfaces. Doweled construction and less vigorous carving also support a 19th-century date for Pendleton's and Palmer's chairs.⁷⁰

While George Palmer may have competed with Charles Pendleton for at least two chairs from the set attributed to Gibbons and Chippendale, like Canfield and Perry, he also frequently consulted him about antique furniture. In 1893 he purchased an imposing Boston bombé desk and bookcase after its exhibition in the Massachusetts Building at the Chicago World's Fair, where it had been displayed because George Washington supposedly used it in Cambridge, Massachusetts, during the Revolution. Owing to this impressive association, stereographic views of the desk had been made as early as 1880, with its illustrious history



Fig. 25
English armchair, ca. 1740, in Sir John Soane's Museum, London. (Photograph courtesy of The Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities, Boston)



Fig. 26
Stereographic view of desk and bookcase taken in New Bedford, 1880, when owned by William Greenleaf Eliot Pope (before restoration). (Photograph courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art)

printed on the back (fig. 26).⁷¹ After purchasing the desk, Palmer sent it to Hartford, Connecticut, where Edwin Simons & Co. repaired it. Apparently the mirrored doors in the upper section were questioned at some point, and so Palmer wrote to Pendleton for his opinion. As Pendleton's reply is the only surviving letter written by him since his college days, it is worth quoting in full:

72 Waterman St.
Prov. Sept. 17th 98

Dear Mr. Palmer:

I should put mahogany panels in your book-case doors without hesitation. Although Chippendale illustrates book-case doors with mirror panels, I have never seen one.

Duveen had one last spring which he sold to Mr. Perry. It had mirror panels and of course he insisted that they were the original ones. After the case came to Providence and my advice asked about them, I proved to Mr. Perry beyond the shadow of a doubt that the glass had not been the original arrangement.

Your book-case is a very interesting piece and I spent much time examining it, & am willing to stake my reputation as an antique crank that the doors originally had moulded panels. I expect to be here during all the next week and shall be glad to see you if you will run up. In case you come it might be well to telegraph me ahead.

Very truly yours

C.L. Pendleton⁷²

Although Pendleton could dismiss himself as an "antique crank," he still emerges as a man with very definite ideas about the way things were originally, even in the face of such conflicting evidence as Chippendale's *Director*. And his convictions proved persuasive, because not only did Perry take his advice, but in the end Palmer did as well. Furthermore, Palmer appears to have had the mirrored doors replaced with wooden beveled panels in Providence under Pendleton's supervision, rather than in Hartford as he had previously done. The addition of a carved mahogany bust of Shakespeare in the pediment immediately brings the Providence sculptor Charles Dowler to mind, as he made a specialty of them, along with the busts of George Washington, and even Beethoven on occasion (fig. 27). They frequently show up on furniture and in architectural settings executed by the cabinet-making firm of Morlock & Bayer for Pendleton, Perry, and Canfield, and indeed might be said to serve as a leitmotif for this particular combination of craftsmen and collectors.⁷³ A carved wooden bust of George Washington commissioned by Pendleton for the pediment of a chimney breast at 72 Waterman Street came to the RISD Museum as part of his bequest (frontispiece).

While Pendleton may have thought that Chippendale's designs showing mirrored doors were never actually executed in the 18th century, there are other instances

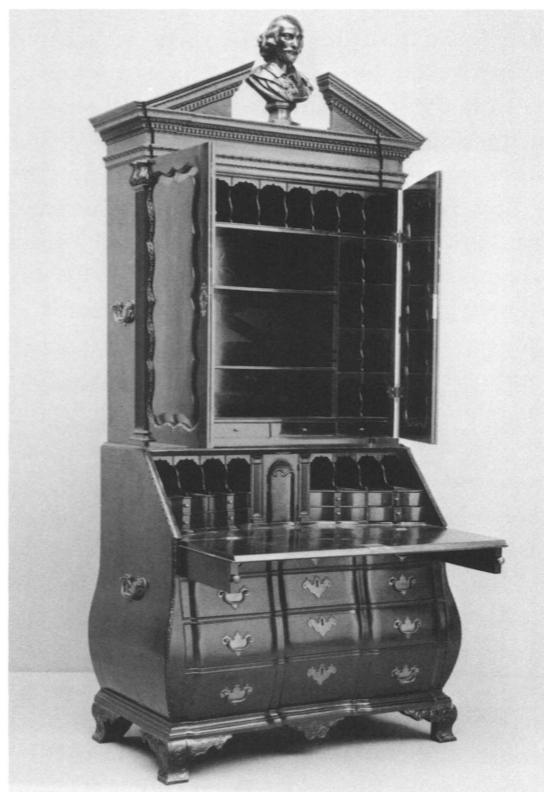


Fig. 27
Desk and bookcase after restoration in Hartford and Providence for George Palmer, reflecting the advice of Charles Pendleton. (The Metropolitan Museum of Art. The John Stewart Kennedy Fund, 1918)

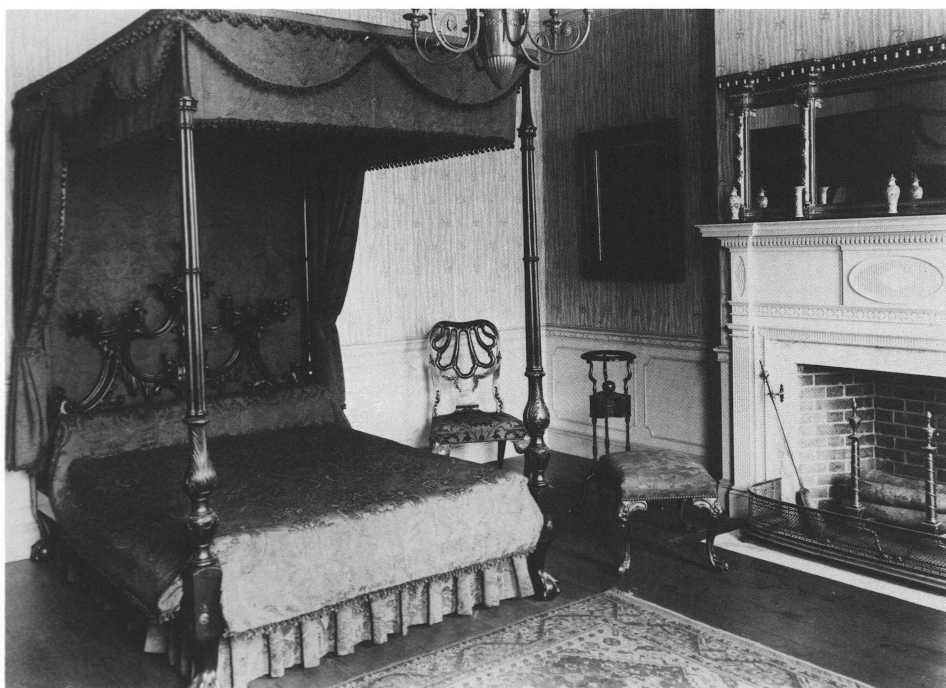


Fig. 28
View of northeast chamber in Pendleton House, ca. 1910, showing Pendleton's bed with headboard made by Morlock & Bayer after Plate 42 in Chippendale's *Director*. (RISD Museum archives)

when he followed the illustrations in the *Director* to the letter. After Pendleton acquired an English bedstead with claw-and-ball feet, he had the missing carved headboard replaced with one derived directly from plate 42 in the *Director*, and supposedly employed Morlock & Bayer to do the work (fig. 28).⁷⁴ In the case of a missing pediment on his own Boston bombé desk and bookcase, Pendleton again turned to Chippendale for the solution (cat. 41). Not only did plate 107 in the *Director* provide the source for the triangular pediment, but also the draped urn finial. On this occasion he may have again used Morlock & Bayer, but just as easily could have turned to R.H. Breitenstein & Son. The only surviving printed bill from Pendleton as an antique dealer shows him selling Breitenstein "One base to block front/high case of drawers," indicating that the firm was quite capable of coping with incomplete pieces of furniture (fig. 29).

Another important Pendleton document is a small account book which he kept in the 1880s for recording purchases as well as sales, with the names for the latter frequently given in code.⁷⁵ Despite that drawback, Pendleton's account book clearly indicates the geographic scope of his antique business, stretching from Portsmouth, New Hampshire to Baltimore, and as far west as Detroit. It also leaves little question that Pendleton frequently authorized "restoration" work on pieces he had purchased, and often let the dealers from whom he bought the pieces do the work, as they invariably combined cabinetmaking with antique dealing. As a result, pieces of furniture once owned by Pendleton can reflect the work of many restorers' hands, and not just those of Dowler, Morlock & Bayer, and R.H. Breitenstein & Son of Providence.

In Baltimore, Pendleton bought several pieces of furniture from the cabinetmaker and antique dealer Frank Heuse in the 1880s, and presumably continued to do so in the 1890s, when he also patronized J.A. Williar & Co., from whom he bought a Federal pier table now at Winterthur.⁷⁶ Pendleton's Chippendale library table may also have come from one of these dealers, because two other closely related examples were purchased in Baltimore (fig. 42). All three have in common cabriole legs with claw-and-ball feet, pulvinated friezes with interlaced fretwork punctuated by rosettes, and gadrooned skirts. George Palmer owned one of them, said to have come from a house in Baltimore, and now in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum.⁷⁷ The celebrated Baltimore collector Dr. William

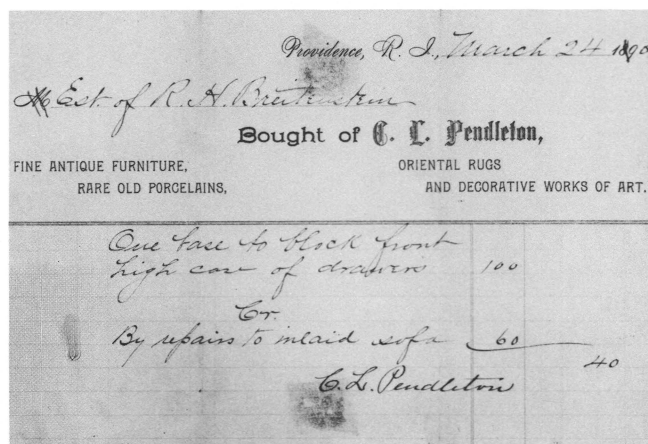


Fig. 29
Printed billhead of Charles L. Pendleton. (Courtesy of Mr. and Mrs. Joseph K. Ott)

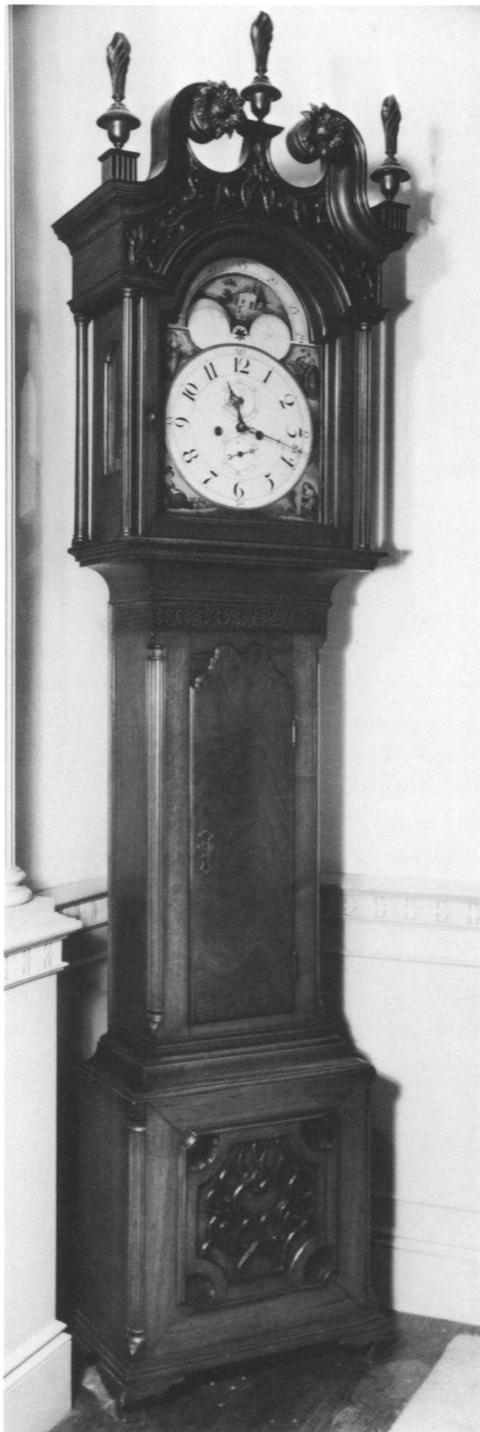


Fig. 30
Tall-case clock in the Pendleton collection (04.097), with case inscribed "Frederick, Md." and with later "restorations" to base and waist section.

Crim had the other, now in the Garvan collection at Yale.⁷⁸ Close scrutiny has shown that the Palmer table is doweled together, suggesting 19th-century construction. Given the similarity of the design and execution of the Palmer, Crim, and Pendleton tables, it is likely that all are products of a late 19th-century Baltimore cabinet shop. To confuse matters still further, Wallace Nutting liked the Palmer table so much that he offered it in his line of reproduction furniture. Sold with or without carving on the frame, it is illustrated as number 650 in the "supreme edition" of the *Wallace Nutting General Catalogue*, published in Framingham, Massachusetts, in 1930.

In nearby Frederick, Maryland, Pendleton bought two tall-case clocks. The one described as coming from Charles Riehl is noted in Pendleton's account book as having been sold. The other clock may well be the one still in the collection at RISD, especially as "Frederick Md." is inscribed on its backboard (fig. 30). Listed in the account book as a "High-case clock – carved," it cost \$50, to which there was an additional charge of \$19 for "restoring case." The marked contrast between the carving in the pediment on a stippled ground, and the carving on the tablet in the base suggest that the former is 18th century, while the latter is late 19th century. Although the tablets found in the bases

Fig. 31
Tall-case clock purchased by Marsden Perry from Charles Pendleton, who considered it "the finest Chippendale carved mahogany tall-case clock he had ever encountered." (Perry collection, AAA-Anderson Galleries, sale 4247 [April 3–4, 1936], lot 274)

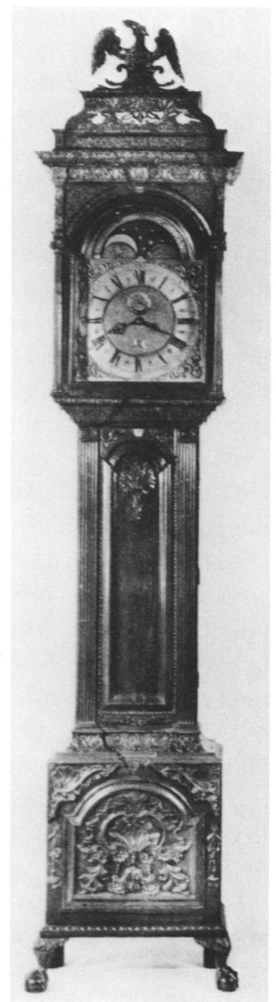




Fig. 32
High chest of drawers in the Pendleton collection (04.106)
probably made in Philadelphia, ca. 1890. (RISD Museum
archives)

of most 18th-century clocks from Maryland and Pennsylvania are uncarved, Pendleton's fondness for richly ornamented surfaces would have required "restoration" to be done in this area. Confirmation of Pendleton's taste can be found in a tall-case clock engulfed in ornamentation, which he acquired in England. The price paid for it was said to be the highest on record for a clock of its type. He sold it to Marsden Perry, in whose sale catalogue of 1936 it is illustrated with the accompanying note: "Mr Pendleton considered this the finest Chippendale carved mahogany tall-case clock he had ever encountered" (fig. 31).⁷⁹ Of all the problematic pieces in the Pendleton collection, this clock, an English desk, and a second clock have the dubious distinction of being included in Herbert Cescinsky's rogues' gallery, titled *The Gentle Art of Faking Furniture*, published in 1931.⁸⁰

To the north, Pendleton found Philadelphia a particularly satisfying city in which to procure antiques. While he bought furniture from many Philadelphia dealers, including James Curran, Thomas & Sons, Davis & Harvey, George G. Fryer, and even the antique department in Wanamaker's, he seems to have favored C.E. Spooner of 427 Locust Street. On the second page of his account book, Pendleton records buying in the early 1880s a "High-case of Drawers (claw & ball)." The "piece in original condition" cost \$35; he spent \$10 "putting on scroll top," \$4.10 "replacing missing brass handles," \$2.50 "scraping

& polishing." Although he sold that example (for a profit of \$58), another Pennsylvania example in the Pendleton collection at RISD shows an even more drastic approach to restoration, and may even be a total reproduction from the end of the 19th century (fig. 32). Compared to a strikingly similar but unaltered 18th-century example in a private Philadelphia collection, the "improvements" to Pendleton's highboy, perhaps made by Spooner, are readily apparent (fig. 33). First, the detachable scroll pediment with its trelliswork decoration is an addition, as is the Chinese Chippendale fretwork frieze immediately below. The distinctively carved concave shell in the upper case of Pendleton's highboy betrays its later execution, not only by the more mechanical character of its carving, but also by its unlikely repetition on two of the drawers in the lower case. A virtually identical scroll pediment, presumably from the same shop, was added to a Philadelphia flat-top chest-on-chest which Pendleton may have sold to Perry, in whose 1936 auction catalogue it is lot 122. Out of six Philadelphia Chippendale dressing tables or lowboys in the Pendleton collection, only three are sufficiently unaltered to be included in this catalogue (cats. 25, 26, 27).⁸¹

As an example of Philadelphia Chippendale "marriages," Pendleton's desk and bookcase has a Philadelphia top, a Massachusetts base, and a Newport interior behind



Fig. 33
High chest of drawers, possibly Chester County, ca. 1760, which
could have inspired the Pendleton high chest. (Private collection)

the lid (fig. 34). Similar marriages can be found in the Garvan collection at Yale,⁸² and in the Adrian Wellens collection,⁸³ where Philadelphia bookcases are found on Massachusetts reverse-serpentine desks with claw-and-ball feet. The Pendleton desk is cited as a reference for authenticating the desk and bookcase in the Wellens sale catalogue, suggesting that it had originally served as the source of inspiration for that particular marriage, and probably numerous others yet to be discovered.

With the emergence in the second half of the 19th century of two opposing schools of thought regarding the treatment of old surfaces, known as the "Scrape School" and the "Anti-Scrape School," critics of the former increasingly took exception to Pendleton's predilection for high gloss French polished surfaces. Architectural restoration had been the initial focus of this debate, with William Morris attacking George Gilbert Scott for his heavy-handed work on English medieval churches. Some of Morris's con-



Fig. 34
Vintage photograph of desk and bookcase in the Pendleton collection (04.040), combining elements of Philadelphia, Newport, and Massachusetts workmanship and probably assembled in Philadelphia, ca. 1890. (RISD Museum archives)

cerns began to emerge shortly thereafter among collectors of antique furniture. The author of *Colonial Furniture of New England*, Dr. Irving W. Lyon, was in the forefront of the anti-scrape school in this country, as revealed in the notes in his journal after a visit to the furniture collection assembled by Henry Waters of Salem in 1883:

He had a beautiful oaken cabinet – Gothic carving... He also owned another oaken cupboard... very fine & old – But some of his other oaken pieces – chests and notably a cupboard had been spoiled in doing over – scraped or planed down so as to look fresh as new oak – & I think other liberties had been taken with feet & possible moldings –

At Mr. Whittredge's Sister's house, near by, to which he took me I saw the two storied oaken cupboard & also the little table which are illustrated in Clarence Cook's book [*The House Beautiful*] – these had also been planed down & freshened & modernized so as to be painfully noticed.⁸⁴

One of the best discussions on over-restoration can be found in Eben Howard Gay's *A Chippendale Romance* of 1915. Indeed, his comments on the treatment of furniture may be among the most valuable in the book, albeit at the expense of Charles Pendleton, who is depicted very much as a gentleman of the old school who favors the scrape approach. In the novel, Pendleton ("Mr. Remington") discusses his approach to refinishing antique furniture with a young collector, who is in fact the author:

"I notice too, Mr. Remington, a glossy polish in the finish of all your specimens, not excepting the frames of your mirrors, which one would hardly expect to find upon furniture undoubtedly old."

"That is the work of my restorer, whom I instruct first to make all necessary repairs, then to scrape away from the surface of the wood every vestige of the 'tooth of time,' and lastly to shellac and rub down with pumice-stone and oil. The 'egg-shell' finish resulting is the nearest we can conceive to being the condition in which the pieces originally came from the hands of the maker, – and how could we hope to improve on that?"⁸⁵

Gay later recounts the conversation to another young but knowledgeable collector, Rose Lee, who makes the following observations:

"I fear I can never agree with him in his ideas upon finishing antique furniture, which, from what you tell me, I believe he over-restores. He must have fallen under the malign influence of a writer I have just been reading, who, in pointing out the way to treat old furniture wrecks, cheerfully recommends that they be

'Given a polish so brilliant a hue
As to make them look newer than when they were new!'

Seriously, why remove all marks of age and wear from a curio that is in reality old, and should not therefore look otherwise? The result can only be a hybrid *new-old* appearance, that is neither one thing nor the other. Would he rub the verdigris off an antique bronze? When he orders the surface of his old furniture scraped, he is sacrificing its most precious quality, – the patina that only time and abrasion can produce, – and I would not entrust one of my pieces to such treatment."⁸⁶

Whatever the deficiencies of Pendleton's taste and judgment, he compensated for them when it came to planning for the future disposition of his collection. The seed for the idea of its finding a home in a museum had already been planted in 1882 when John Jones bequeathed his 18th-century French furniture to the Victoria and Albert Museum. In Providence, Pendleton's fellow citizens were helping to fertilize that seed by organizing in 1892 the largest display of American decorative arts from the Colonial period ever to occur in the city. Under the auspices of the Gaspee Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution, over 2,000 objects were shown on April 19 and 20 of that year in the rooms of the Rhode Island Historical Society on Waterman Street. Even though the emphasis was on ancestry, rather than aesthetics, Pendleton showed his support for the project by lending "very rare and beautiful old Silver Spoons, and several other different articles of Silver."⁸⁷ Mrs. William Ames lent two chairs, one of which had belonged to Roger Williams, the other to Gabriel Bernon,⁸⁸ and they may well be the ones shown flanking the gate-leg table in the main display room (cat. 3a; also see fig. 35). Mrs. Wilbour of Bristol lent an old bureau and chair on the strength of their having come from "Hawthorne's 'Seven Gable House,'" indicating that literary associations still played an important role in the

value people placed on old furniture.⁸⁹ Nonetheless, an interest in antiques from the standpoint of their design, which had first emerged in the 1870s, continued to make headway.

The decade of the American Centennial produced the two earliest reference books published in America on antique ceramics; in 1891 the first book on antique furniture appeared, Irving W. Lyon's *Colonial Furniture of New England*. It broke new historical ground in this country in its use of estate inventories, literary references, and newspaper advertisements, having been influenced by Henry Havard's *Dictionnaire de l'ameublement et de la décoration*, published in four volumes in France between 1887 and 1891. Lyon also included notes on design, construction, and use of woods, along with 113 illustrations of furniture, making it useful to more than those having an antiquarian bent. As noted in a review of *Colonial Furniture* that appeared in the *Providence Sunday Journal* in 1892: "These illustrations, to say nothing of the text, should make the book a necessity to artists, architects, designers of furniture, to house furnishers and decorators, and to teachers and lecturers upon domestic arts."⁹⁰ In 1895 Alvin Crocker Nye capitalized on the interest Lyon's book generated among designers and craftsmen by publishing his *Collection of Scale-drawings, Details, and Sketches of What is Commonly Known as Colonial Furniture* (fig. 53).

At the end of the 1890s, Henry Watson Kent, curator of the Slater Memorial Museum in Norwich, Connecticut,



Fig. 35
Committee members of the Gaspee Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution, posed in the rooms of the Rhode Island Historical Society during the *Loan Exhibition of Colonial and Revolutionary Relics*, April 19–20, 1892. The Derby family chest-on-chest now in the Garvan collection stands against the wall. (Photograph: private collection)



Fig. 36
High chest of drawers, Portsmouth, New Hampshire, ca. 1750,
formerly in the Pendleton collection, now in the Diplomatic
Reception Rooms, State Department, Washington. Illustrated as
frontispiece in Luke Vincent Lockwood, *Colonial Furniture in
America* (1901).

organized an exhibition of chairs titled *Byzantine to Chippendale*.⁹¹ Tracing the chair's historical and artistic development, the exhibition drew heavily upon examples from the collection of Pendleton's good friend, George Palmer. In a similar vein in 1901, the RISD Museum arranged a large loan exhibition of metalwork for the purpose of comparing "modern and early artisanship."⁹² Among the collection of andirons, a set which belonged to General Israel Putnam was shown next to a set recently forged in Providence by Sydney Burleigh, along with another pair of Venetian wrought iron lent by Mrs. Walter Peck, and a pair used by Benjamin Franklin lent by Miss Mary Knowles. An impressive group of locally owned Colonial American silver and pewter was included in this exhibition as well. If Pendleton had had any lingering doubts about the utility of his collection in a museum, they were dispelled by the growing interest in American decorative arts reflected in the exhibitions and publications dating from the very end of the 19th century.

Perhaps in preparation for the bequest of his collection to the RISD Museum, Charles Pendleton sold 260 objects at auction in 1897. The catalogue gives the definite impression of a collector refining his holdings. Items sold ranged from an "old cigarette case, of silver, beautifully wrought," to a "superb library bookcase by Chippendale; solid mahogany with pediment top, ornamented in centre with a life size bust of Shakespeare, carved in solid mahogany."⁹³ In that year Pendleton also moved from the west side of Providence to a far more genteel residence on the east side at 72 Waterman Street (fig. 39). Originally built in 1799 for Edward Dexter on George Street—and in 1860 moved to its present location after being literally cut in half—its many distinguished exterior and interior architectural details made it an ideal setting for Pendleton to put his collection in order before its removal to the Museum.⁹⁴ In 1897 Pendleton listed himself as a dealer in antique furniture for the first time in the Providence directory, with his new residence containing not only his personal collection, but also objects for sale.

Although it has always been assumed that Pendleton kept for his own collection the best pieces of antique furniture he acquired, at the time of his death a number of fine examples not included in his bequest were sold to settle his estate. Presumably drawn from his stock, they included a superb Philadelphia scalloped-top tea table with tripod base which eventually found its way to the Museum as a bequest of Leila P. Bowen, who had purchased it from his estate (cat. 75). A similar table that came with Pendleton's collection (cat. 74) could well have been considered a duplicate, despite significant differences in the design of their pedestals. However, a singular Portsmouth, New Hampshire, block-front high chest of drawers in his estate was quite unlike anything included in his bequest; it had been held in such high regard in Pendleton's lifetime that Luke Vincent

Lockwood selected it for the frontispiece of the first edition of his *Colonial Furniture in America*, published in 1901 (fig. 36). Mr. and Mrs. G.G. Ernst of Norwalk, Connecticut, purchased that particular piece, along with several others, through Walter Durfee as the executor of Pendleton's estate.⁹⁵ The chest is now in the collection of American furniture housed in the Diplomatic Reception Rooms in the State Department in Washington.⁹⁶

Luke Vincent Lockwood was both a colleague and a friend of Pendleton, as well as of Richard Canfield and Marsden Perry, and served as the executor of Canfield's and Perry's estates in 1914 and 1935, respectively. As the recent author of *Colonial Furniture in America*, there was absolutely no question that he was the best qualified person to prepare the Pendleton catalogue in 1904. In addition, nobody else summed up more succinctly and accurately Pendleton's contribution to the field of antique collecting in this country than did Lockwood in his letter of condolence written to Walter Durfee on June 27, 1904:

My dear Mr. Durfee,

Your telegram announcing poor Mr. Pendleton's death is received and although not unexpected it is a shock to feel that he has really passed away.

I know of nobody who has had a better influence in the field of art than has he and he can truly be called the father of art as applied to furniture in this country. There is hardly a collector here who has not received help and inspiration from Mr. Pendleton.

I am glad his last days could be lightened with the thought that the collection he had put together with such sacrifice was to be permanently housed in a fitting way and my only regret is that he could not have lived to see its complete realization.

With kind regards I am
Sincerely yours
Luke Vincent Lockwood⁹⁷

Another friend who received much help from Pendleton was the prodigious collector and private dealer, Thomas B. Clarke, of New York City. Upon hearing from Lockwood of Pendleton's death, he too wrote to Durfee, noting how they had first met one another in March 1891, at the sale of the Brayton Ives collection, from which Pendleton "bought for himself and others some of the finest lots." Then, like Lockwood, he remarked on Pendleton's significance as a pioneer collector of decorative arts in America:

In the classes of English and Colonial furniture and English pottery, no amateur in this country had finer taste or better judgment in selection. His noble gift to the Rhode Island School of Design of his matchless collection, will enroll his name for all time as one of those who has given great aid to his fellow countrymen who wish to study and gather about them the best expressions of English artists, in furniture and pottery. I never knew a collector more keen or exacting than Mr. Pendleton. The integrity of an art object he considered along with its artistic worth and beauty. His standard for general excellence was the highest, as he added to his holdings of old

English furniture.

Last month I spent an afternoon with Mr. Pendleton and his beautiful art possessions in his residence [at] 72 Waterman Street Providence. He then gave me the facts of his deed of gift of his entire collection to the School of Design, and also exhibited the architect's drawings for the dignified structure provided by certain citizens of Providence for the installation of the princely gift. "And now" he said "I am ready to go." He talked with absolute composure of his approaching death. I never witnessed such fortitude before.

As one who had received from him the very best instruction and advice in collecting old English furniture and pottery, I write to you to say that this intelligent amateur will be greatly missed in the small group of true experts that exist in this country today.⁹⁸

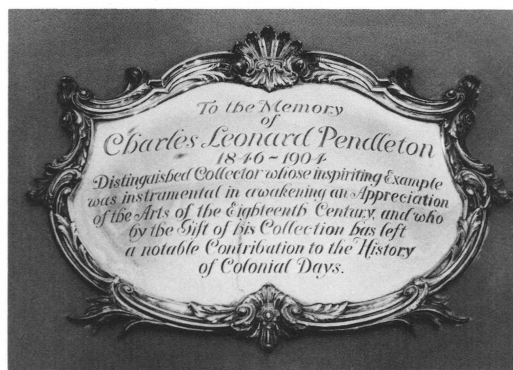


Fig. 37
Silver plaque commissioned by Harry Harkness Flagler in 1914, designed by the architect Walter Sheldon, and installed in the front hall of Pendleton House.

While younger than Lockwood and Clarke, the collector Harry Harkness Flagler was no less indebted to Pendleton for the valuable assistance he had given him in the formation of his collection of American furniture. The many distinguished pieces illustrated from the Flagler collection in Frances Clary Morse's *Furniture of the Olden Time*, first published in 1902, are a testament to this fact.⁹⁹ Flagler, too, wanted to leave his tribute to Pendleton, which took the form of the highly decorative Rococo-style silver plaque now installed in the front hall of Pendleton House (fig. 37). Commissioned by Flagler in 1914, appropriately the plaque was designed by Walter Sheldon, whose firm of Stone, Carpenter & Willson had provided the drawings for the building in 1904.¹⁰⁰ It is engraved with the following:

To the memory
of
Charles Leonard Pendleton
1846-1904

Distinguished Collector whose inspiring Example
was instrumental in awakening an Appreciation
of the Arts of the Eighteenth Century, and who
by the Gift of his Collection has left
a notable Contribution to the History
of Colonial Days.

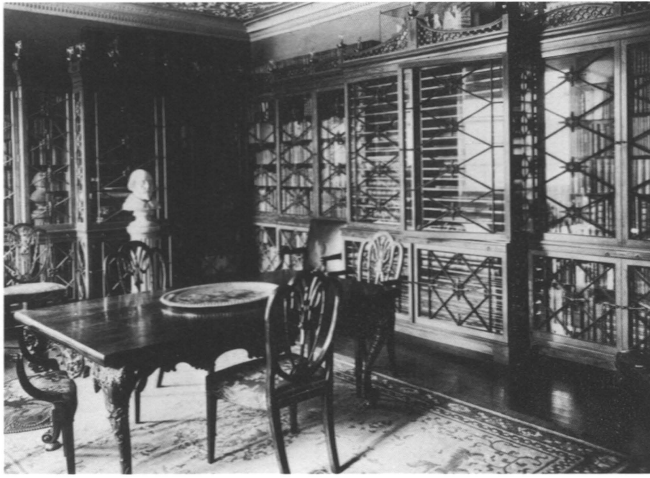


Fig. 38
A corner of the Shakespeare library in the basement of Marsden J. Perry's house at 52 Power Street, Providence. Designed by Stone, Carpenter and Willson and executed by Morlock and Bayer in 1901. (Jesse Metcalf Fund. 80.070)

Thomas Clarke mentions in his letter that Pendleton showed him the designs for the projected building which would house his collection on Benefit Street (color plate, p. 8). They had been prepared by Edmund Willson, who first emerged as a possible architect for the project with his designs for the Henry J. Steere house at Nayatt Point in 1884 (fig. 12).¹⁰¹ Although a youthful work, its success had encouraged him to make Colonial Revival architecture a specialty. In the course of his architectural practice, he

also assisted Richard Canfield in the design of the interiors for his town house and casino at 5 East 44th Street in New York City in 1898,¹⁰² creating a suitably restrained backdrop for Canfield's collection of Chinese Chippendale furniture (fig. 20). Marsden Perry benefited as well from Willson's talents as a Colonial Revival architect, first in his renovations of the Eliza Ward house at 2 George Street in 1898,¹⁰³ followed by the renovations of the John Brown house at 52 Power Street in 1901, not to mention an impressive stable block for Perry on lower Power Street in 1903 (the latter crowned by a lantern housing a Walter Durfee clock). Willson's own sensitivity to 18th-century furniture can be seen in his splendid adaptation of plates from Hepplewhite and Sheraton for the breakfront bookcases housing Perry's impressive Shakespeare collection, which was without peer until eclipsed by those of Henry Clay Folger and Henry Huntington. Morlock & Bayer actually made the cases; the brass finials in their pediments recall those found on tall-case clocks, and were undoubtedly contributed by Walter Durfee, "the father of the modern grandfather clock" (fig. 38).

Pendleton House was the capstone of Willson's career, both literally and figuratively, as he died during the year of its completion, 1906. The first elevation Willson prepared (color plate p. 8) was a conflation of 72 Waterman Street (fig. 39), where Pendleton was living at the time of his death, and Mount Pleasant in Philadelphia's Fairmount Park.¹⁰⁴ In view of the preponderance of Philadelphia Chippendale furniture in Pendleton's collection, such a



Fig. 39
The Edward Dexter House, 1799, originally erected on George Street and later moved to 72 Waterman Street, where Charles Pendleton resided between 1897 and 1904.

reference was not inappropriate. Given the obvious concern with fire, Willson substituted bricks for the wooden clapboards found on 72 Waterman Street. While the bricks remained in the revised scheme, the elevation otherwise had to be considerably scaled down, no doubt due to unforeseen expenses connected with settling Pendleton's estate (fig. 40). In the end the more modest facade has probably proven to be a better neighbor along Benefit Street than the one originally proposed. Furthermore, it allowed Willson to inject more of himself into its design.

With the exception of the paneled balustrade from 72 Waterman Street, Willson took virtually all the other architectural details for the revised facade from the Pickman house of ca. 1821 at 328 Essex Street, in his home town of Salem, Massachusetts. That source accounts for the fanlight doorway under a Corinthian portico, the Palladian window within a relieving arch, and window caps ornamented with an incised Roman key pattern. Willson had the opportunity to reacquaint himself with the Pickman house facade in 1895 while making interior alterations to the Ropes house immediately next door at 318 Essex Street.¹⁰⁵ In addition, Willson's design for the butler's pantry in that house served as a preview for a similar treatment in Pendleton House, both having cupboard doors incorporating interlaced Gothic glazing bars.

Unlike the exterior, the interior relied heavily on that of 72 Waterman Street, except that Willson reversed the position of the rooms, with the library moved from the left side of the front door to the right (figs. 42, 43), the stair-

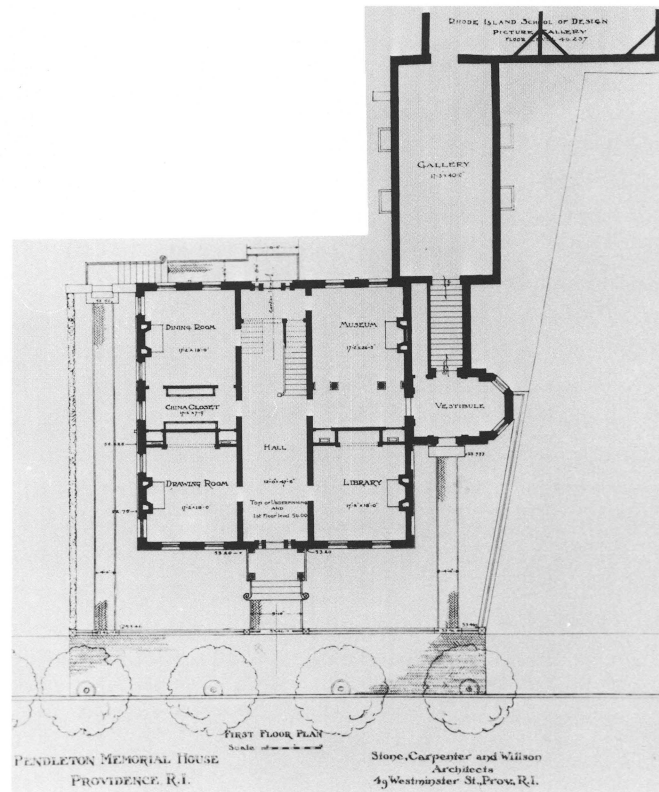


Fig. 41
Floor plan of Pendleton House, Benefit Street, published in *International Studio*, v. 31 (1907).



Fig. 40
Pendleton House, Benefit Street façade, shortly after completion in 1906 from the designs of Edmund Willson. (RISD Museum archives)

case from the left side to the right (figs. 44, 45), etc. This reversal was necessary so that the room that corresponded to the kitchen at 72 Waterman Street could adjoin the new corridor gallery designed by Charles Platt in 1905 to link the existing museum with Pendleton House (fig. 41).¹⁰⁶ Since there was no need to replicate Pendleton's kitchen, the corresponding space served from the start as an exhibition gallery. The only other interior changes occurred in the introduction of door knobs based on ones from the Moses Brown Ives house of ca. 1835 at 10 Brown Street, and mantelpieces based on more elaborate examples from other Providence houses. For example, a mantelpiece with scroll pediment in the Governor Arnold house at 14 John Street served as Willson's model for the one in the exhibition gallery.¹⁰⁷ For reproducing the interior woodwork, Willson employed the cabinetmaking firm of Morlock & Bayer, except in the northwest bedroom.¹⁰⁸ There he used an actual Federal period mantelpiece which had been saved from the John H. Mason house of 1804 on Weybosset Street when it was torn down in 1879 (fig. 46). The mantel-



Fig. 42
Pendleton's library at 72 Waterman Street, ca. 1900. (RISD Museum archives)



Fig. 44
Pendleton's front hall at 72 Waterman Street, ca. 1900. (RISD Museum archives)



Fig. 43
Library in Pendleton House, Benefit Street, ca. 1910. (RISD Museum archives)

piece had been presented to the Museum as early as 1897 by Harold P. Waterman, perhaps with this new building in mind.

Photographs of the interior of 72 Waterman Street, compared with those of Pendleton House taken shortly after completion, clearly show that the placement of the furniture was faithfully duplicated, along with the rugs, ceramics, paintings and lighting fixtures (figs. 42–45). In other words, 72 Waterman Street quite literally served as a dress rehearsal for the installation of the Pendleton collection in its new home at RISD.

Harmony was achieved through a careful orchestration of color, beginning with the floors stained dark brown to complement the mahogany furniture and the dark varnished canvases by “Old Masters.” In the hall Pendleton introduced warmth through touches of red in the Oriental carpets, the 16th-century velvet on the chair seats, the *sang-de-bœuf* porcelain, and the “Bohemian” glass panels in the lanterns. Although Pendleton in the process may have sacrificed historical accuracy for the sake of aesthetic



Fig. 45
Front hall in Pendleton House, Benefit Street, ca. 1910. (RISD Museum archives)



Fig. 46
Federal period mantelpiece removed from the 1804 John H. Mason House on Weybosset Street and installed in the northwest chamber of Pendleton House, 1906. (Gift of Harold P. Waterman)

harmony, he still strove to suggest a home that “a gentleman of the last half of the eighteenth century, with taste and wealth, might have made.”¹⁰⁹

When Pendleton House opened on October 22, 1906, it was greeted with enthusiasm by laymen and professionals alike, and quickly became a mecca for anybody interested in American decorative arts. Among the first organized groups to visit Pendleton House was the Boston Society of Architects in June 1907. Although its delegation of forty members saw a broad spectrum of Providence’s architecture, McKim, Mead & White’s State House and Edmund Willson’s Pendleton House were singled out for special praise by J. Randolph Coolidge at the dinner at the University Club following the tour. On the subject of Pendleton House, he noted:

The Pendleton Museum illustrates the most perfect embodiment of colonial architecture. It offers to every member of our profession a lesson in good taste, history and civic pride.¹¹⁰

Pendleton House again served as a focus for the Providence meeting in May 1908 of the Club of Odd Volumes from Boston, not to mention the Walpole Society in 1912. The latter gathering would have given Charles Pendleton special pleasure because it consisted of a select group of gentlemen collectors and curators of American furniture. Its establishment in 1910 signaled that this area of collecting had finally come of age thanks to the pioneering efforts of individuals like Pendleton, as well as to the *Hudson-Fulton Exhibition* at the Metropolitan Museum in 1909, and the acquisition of the Eugene Bolles collection of early American furniture by that same institution at the end of 1909.¹¹¹ Not only would Pendleton probably have known all twenty-two original members, but many of them had been greatly influenced by his counsel and

encouragement through the years, particularly Richard Canfield, Thomas Clarke, Harry Harkness Flagler, Luke Vincent Lockwood, and George Palmer. When Marsden Perry became a member of the Walpole Society a short while later, the Pendleton circle was fully represented, save for the man who had been at its center.

Knowledge of Pendleton House spread quickly through its publication in periodicals such as *International Studio* in 1907 (fig. 41),¹¹² *The Home Furnisher* in 1919, and *The Antiquarian* in 1924,¹¹³ as well as in books on interior furnishings and decoration, including Walter Dyer’s *Early American Craftsmen* (New York, 1915) and Alice and Bettina Jackson’s *Study of Interior Decoration* (New York, 1928). Such publications brought students and professional designers to Pendleton House to study the room arrangements, and to measure individual pieces of furniture. Arthur Stace, writing for the *Grand Rapids Press* on July 26, 1918, stated that Pendleton House “belongs in Grand Rapids, the furniture town; not in Providence, the textile and jewelry town.”¹¹⁴

Artists saw the interiors of Pendleton House as providing the perfect backdrop for paintings requiring Colonial settings, of which a representative example is William Cushing Loring’s 1917 oil of a woman dusting a Hawthorn jar in the southeast parlor (fig. 47). The choice of subject is reminiscent of William Paxton and other members of the Boston School to which Loring belonged. But not all appli-



Fig. 47
William Cushing Loring, *A Corner of the Southeast Parlor in Pendleton House*, 1917. Oil on canvas. From 1906 to 1920, the artist was head of the department of freehand drawing and painting at RISD. (Courtesy of Stanton D. Loring)

cations to use the House in this way were approved, as revealed in the Minutes of the Museum Committee meeting of November 12, 1907: "Voted not to permit Mr. Davidson to make photographs of friends in Colonial costumes in Pendleton House."

While Pendleton's bequest enabled the RISD Museum to play a leading role in the display of American decorative arts in a domestic setting, events were already underway that would displace it from that position. Henry Watson Kent, in his capacity as secretary to Robert de Forest at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, organized the 1909 *Hudson-Fulton Exhibition* with its strong emphasis on American decorative arts, including some pieces shown with actual period paneling. Its success encouraged Kent to implement an idea he had had since at least 1907 for the Metropolitan Museum to purchase the collection of Eugene Bolles of Boston, which had figured so prominently in the recent exhibition.¹¹⁵ Its acquisition through funds provided by Mrs. Russell Sage in 1909 in turn served as the springboard for the American Wing funded by Mr. and Mrs. Robert de Forest. In preparation for the opening of the Wing in 1924, the preceding decade witnessed a flurry of collecting by the Metropolitan Museum, especially in the form of period woodwork to provide authentic backgrounds for the Bolles collection and others, including the cream of George Palmer's collection acquired in 1918. The fact that Pendleton House used reproduction woodwork – with the exception of the Federal period mantelpiece in an upstairs bedroom (fig. 46) – made it appear outdated in the wake of the Metropolitan's activities. It is perhaps worth mentioning that at this very same time plaster casts of sculpture also fell out of favor. If it was not an original work of art, then it was thought dishonest, or at least inappropriate, to display it in an art museum. Plaster casts, however, were much easier to dispose of than an entire house, especially one only just built to fulfill the specific conditions of a bequest. By the 1940s, the rooms in Pendleton House were considered such an embarrassment that the Museum's future director, John Maxon, urged that the woodwork and walls be painted the same color, not only to make the rooms seem more spacious, but also to conceal the blight of reproduction architectural detailing.¹¹⁶

ELIZA RADEKE PLANS FOR A NEW AMERICAN WING AT THE MUSEUM

The first person at RISD to detect a change in attitude toward period room displays was Mrs. Gustav Radeke (1855–1931), who would become president of the School in 1913, and had made the Museum her life's work ever since it first opened its doors on Waterman Street in 1893 (fig. 48). Like Pendleton, she had attended the Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia in 1876, and perhaps the New England Kitchen initially sparked her interest in old things (fig. 6). She certainly had every opportunity to study



Fig. 48
Eliza Greene Metcalf Radeke, ca. 1920. (RISD Museum archives)

that display while she assisted her mother as a hostess in the Rhode Island Building, which incidentally produced a profit of \$1675, out of which RISD would be founded in 1877.¹¹⁷ Mrs. Radeke demonstrated her interest in American decorative arts when she and her brother, Stephen O. Metcalf, contributed the funds which made the Pendleton bequest a reality in 1904.

Mrs. Radeke had first met Henry Watson Kent about 1890 when he was curator of the Slater Memorial Museum in Norwich, Connecticut. Somewhat ironically, she had sought his advice on the acquisition of plaster casts for RISD, as many other museums were then doing, because his museum had one of the most comprehensive displays of such casts, and incidentally still does.¹¹⁸ When he later moved to New York, she kept in touch, and through him eventually became friends with Robert and Emily de Forest, with whom she initially shared an interest in peasant pottery.¹¹⁹ Therefore she was in contact with the people directly involved in the creation of the American Wing at the Metropolitan Museum. Furthermore, through his authorship of the Pendleton catalogue in 1904, she also knew Luke Vincent Lockwood, who was forging ahead at the same time with the acquisition of original woodwork for a rival series of American period

rooms at the Brooklyn Museum. Succumbing to peer pressure, Mrs. Radeke decided by the mid-teens that RISD should join in the quest for early rooms.

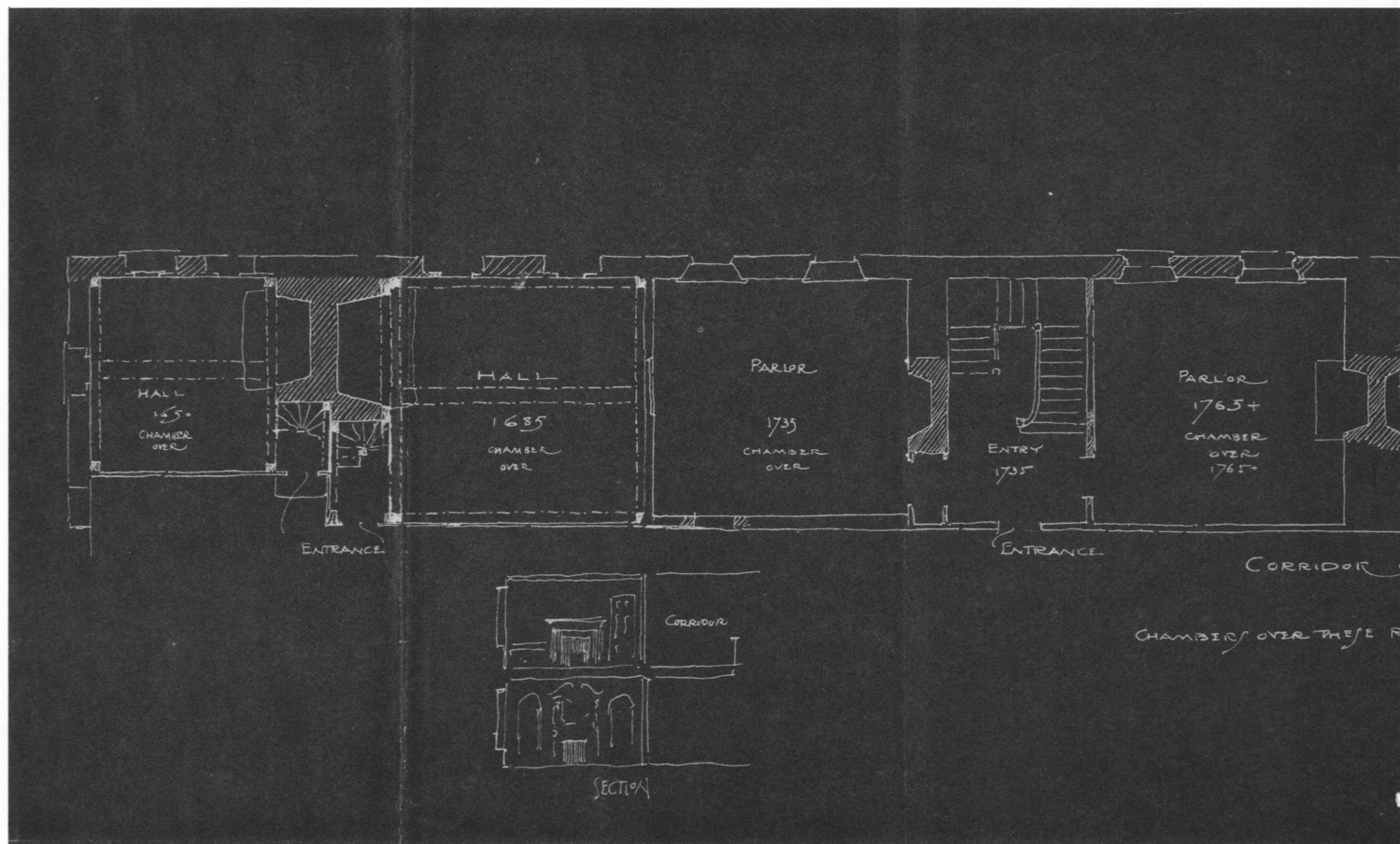
Another motive for acquiring early rooms concerned the narrow focus of the existing collection in Pendleton House. While the Bolles collection was rich in 17th-century American oak furniture, the Pendleton collection included only one piece from that century, an English tall-case clock by Fromanteel and Clarke of London from about 1690. Aside from its neglect of early things, the Pendleton collection also totally ignored anything in the 18th century which did not have a high-style urban appearance. Consequently, Pendleton's furniture tended to stress connections with London rather than the American frontier. By correcting this bias through the addition of new rooms, Mrs. Radeke hoped to make it possible "for all the newcomers in our noisy city to appreciate the craftsmanship of older America."¹²⁰

As early as 1913 the Museum Committee said it would accept early utensils for a proposed New England kitchen display in the basement of Pendleton House, perhaps hearkening back to the one at the Philadelphia Centen-

nial.¹²¹ It appears, however, that 1916 was the watershed year in which Mrs. Radeke made a serious commitment to broadening the scope of the American furniture collection through a series of period rooms stretching from 1650 to 1815. Given her personal preference for high-style 18th-century furniture, she used an outside consultant for locating the early pieces of furniture and paneling, much as she consulted Edward Perry Warren for classical antiquities, and Martin Birnbaum for drawings.¹²² In this instance she secured the services of Arthur Leslie Green (1864-1949), having been introduced through a mutual friend, Mrs. Arthur P. Hunt, of New York City.¹²³ As Green lived in nearby Newport, already had a large collection of his own, and an independent (albeit modest) income, he was the ideal man for the job, which became all-consuming.

Even before Green came aboard, Mrs. Radeke had asked the Rhode Island architect Norman Isham (1864-1943) to draw up a preliminary but ultimately unrealized plan for a series of period rooms to be added to Pendleton House in the vicinity of the present entrance to the Museum (fig. 49). As the co-author with Albert Brown in 1895 of the pioneering *Early Rhode Island Houses*, and the architect in 1904 for the restoration of the interior of the 17th-century Henry Whitfield house in Guilford, Connecticut, Isham was well qualified for the task.¹²⁴ His 1916

Fig. 49
Blueprint floor plan of proposed addition by Norman Isham to Pendleton House for a series of period rooms ranging from 1650 to 1815. (RISD Museum archives)

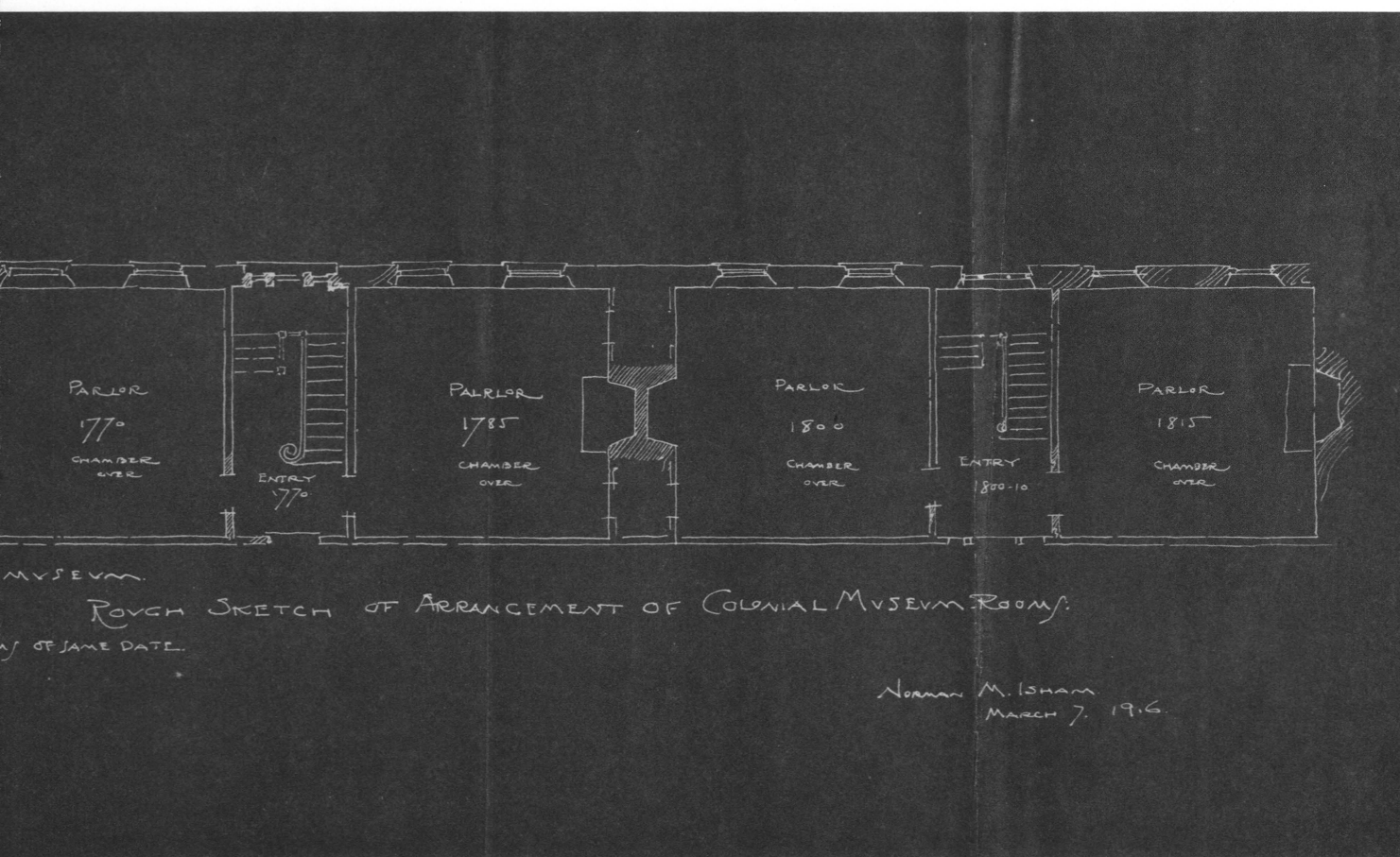


sketch shows a series of eight halls or parlors with chambers above linked by staircases, for 1650, 1685, 1735, 1765, 1770, 1785, 1800, and 1815. Although such a "duplex" arrangement made it possible to separate bedroom furniture from the rest, it would have proved impractical from the standpoint of security and circulation, as the Yale Art Gallery and the Detroit Institute of Arts have since found out. On the exterior walls separating the rooms from the corridor, Isham proposed using original architectural elements, and Green took the idea a step further by suggesting an enclosed paved courtyard surmounted on three sides by buildings, complete with their roofs. Although there is probably no direct link, a similar courtyard arrangement dating from the 1940s can be seen at Winterthur.¹²⁵

The earliest record of Isham's attempts to secure rooms is from 1915, when he approached the Hazard family about selling the paneled parlor out of the Metcalf-Bowler house of ca. 1760 in Portsmouth, Rhode Island.¹²⁶ In 1916 Green joined in the pursuit of that room, but in the end they failed in the face of stiff competition from the Metropolitan Museum.¹²⁷ The removal of that room to New York City, made all the more painful because of its connection with the Metcalf family, not surprisingly put a severe strain on Mrs. Radeke's friendship with the Robert de Forests. In order to avoid similar hard feelings between

Mrs. Radeke and Luke Vincent Lockwood, RISD and the Brooklyn Museum in 1920 shared the paneling from the Joseph Russell house of 1772 at 118 North Main Street in Providence, much to the distress of William Sumner Appleton at the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities in Boston. If he had known that all the rooms were not to stay in New England, he would have urged the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, to compete for some of them for their projected American wing.¹²⁸ However, Appleton could not have faulted the RISD Museum for its diligence in obtaining the paneled parlor (fig. 50) and stair hall from the Brenton-Coe house of ca. 1720 in Newport.¹²⁹ Doubtless the most important room to be acquired by RISD, its transferral took ten years to accomplish and an expenditure of \$10,000.

Norman Isham's involvement with period rooms at RISD does not appear to have gone much further than his 1916 plan, perhaps because he became increasingly committed to helping the Metropolitan Museum install theirs.¹³⁰ However, Arthur Leslie Green more than compensated for his absence, having already had experience incorporating numerous architectural details from old houses into his own residence in Newport, known as the Weaver house, and also at Paradise Farm in Middletown, Rhode Island, for Miss Mabel Norman. Green in turn may have been inspired by Ben: Perley Poore, who had pio-



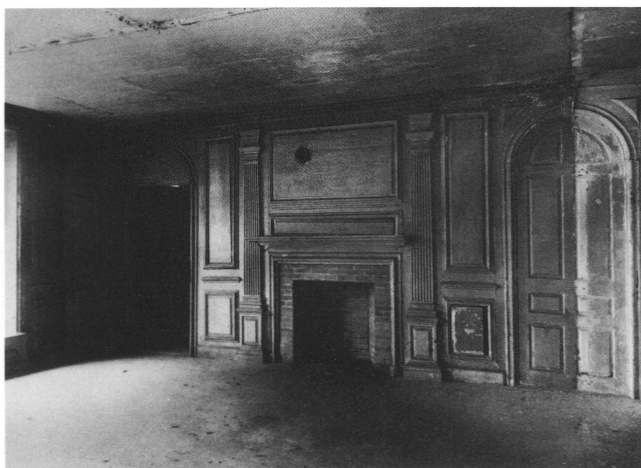


Fig. 50
Paneled parlor in Brenton-Coe house, Newport, ca. 1720,
photographed ca. 1915. (RISD Museum archives)

neered as early as the 1850s in the reuse of Colonial woodwork at his country estate, Indian Hill, in West Newbury, Massachusetts (cat. 164). There is no question that Indian Hill served as the source of inspiration for Henry David Sleeper, who brought such “recycling” to a state of aesthetic perfection at his nearby summer residence, Beauport, on Eastern Point in Gloucester, Massachusetts, starting in 1907.¹³¹ While the Beauport interiors were very

much in the minds of all those concerned with period rooms at RISD (and would later be a point of reference for Henry Francis du Pont when creating Winterthur), RISD’s architect for the addition which would house the period rooms, William T. Aldrich (1880-1966), did not favor them as a model for the Museum.

Having been a guest at Beauport, Aldrich had first-hand knowledge of those interiors and the man who had masterminded them.¹³² He was well aware of Sleeper’s lack of concern for historical accuracy when dismantling early rooms and reconstructing them, and he doubtless realized that a similar situation prevailed at Arthur Leslie Green’s house in Newport. In the case of Green, this is borne out by the absence of records for the many rooms he acquired for RISD, making their reconstruction highly problematic for the architect involved. Consequently, Aldrich dragged his feet when it came time to install the actual rooms, although he always made provision for them in his various schemes, including a particularly ambitious design of 1920 showing Pendleton House enveloped by two great Georgian wings (fig. 51). However, when the present addition designed by Aldrich in 1924 finally opened its doors in 1926, the period rooms were nowhere in sight. Ironically, the space which had been set aside for the rooms on C floor ended up serving as a storage area for the furniture waiting to go in them. Even though the furniture would wait there in vain, RISD’s and Mrs. Radeke’s

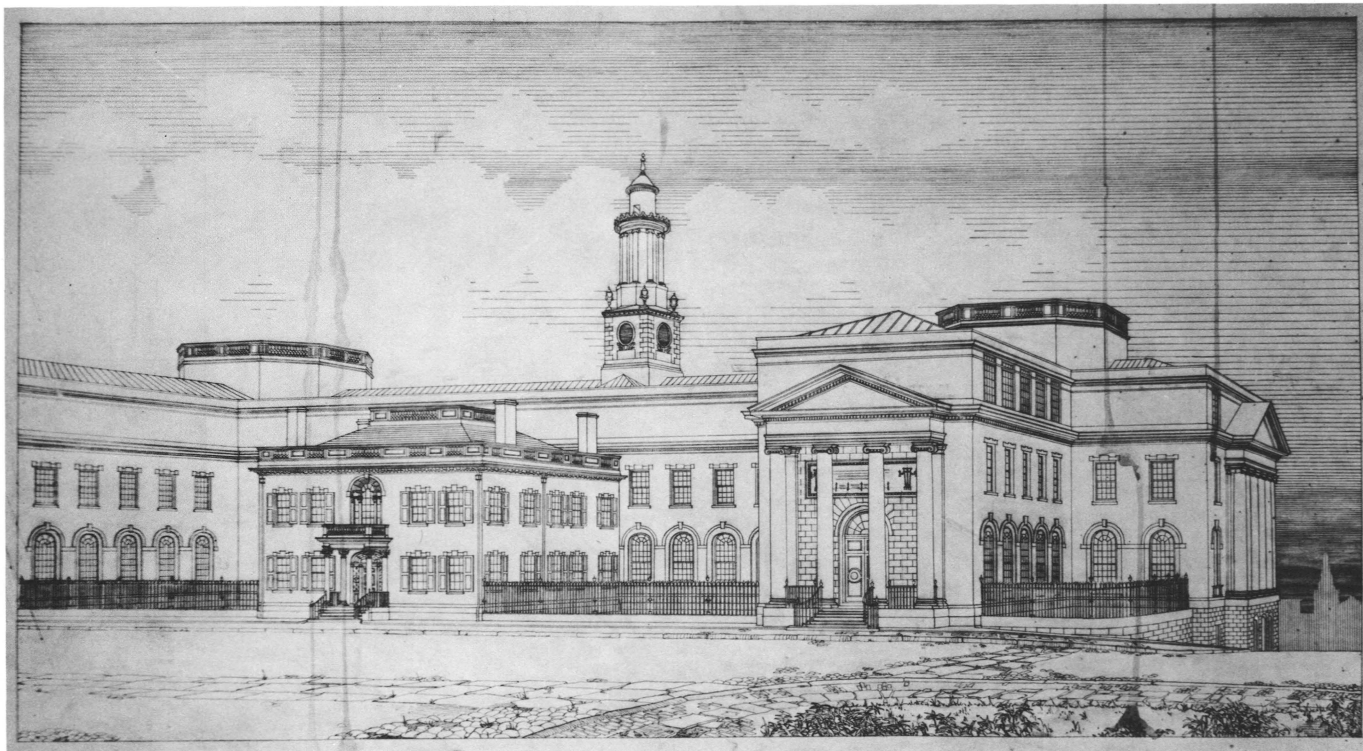


Fig. 51
Proposed scheme, 1920, by William T. Aldrich for the Rhode
Island School of Design, with Pendleton House as its centerpiece.
(RISD Museum archives)

major commitment of time and money to American period rooms meant that the idea died slowly, with woodwork still being acquired for them by the Museum as late as the 1940s.

Even without the rooms, Arthur Leslie Green left an impressive legacy to RISD through the Colonial furniture and accessories he acquired for Mrs. Radeke between 1916 and her death in 1931. Its significance has never been fully appreciated for the simple reason that the Radeke collection was “homeless” and would be until the late 1960s when an upstairs room was finally set aside in Pendleton House for the display of a necessarily limited selection of pieces from it.¹³³ In fact, before the publication of this catalogue, the only comprehensive record of the Radeke collection appears in an article by Miriam Banks published in *The Fine Arts* in January 1932, and titled “Art in Primitive Americana: The Radeke Collection.” While illustrating only the highlights, it shows that Green was remarkably successful in finding representative and often distinguished examples of most of the major forms, including joined chests, butterfly tables, and turned great chairs, not to mention an impressive group of Windsor chairs that literally formed a collection within the collection.¹³⁴

Green acquired pieces for Mrs. Radeke from well-known dealers and dealer-collectors from New Hampshire to New York, including Israel Sack, then based in Boston, and Francis Hill Bigelow in Cambridge, Massachusetts. However, he tended to favor dealers in the Hartford area, including Sam Weinick, because he had caught the antique collecting bug there as a student at Trinity College in the 1880s and '90s.¹³⁵ At that time he may have met Luke Vincent Lockwood, who graduated from Trinity College in 1893, as well as Dr. Irving W. Lyon. Therefore, Mrs. Radeke's acquisition of a piece from Dr. Lyon's pioneering collection, the so-called “Nicholas Disbrow” chest (cat. 1), which is also illustrated as plate 3 in Lyon's *Colonial Furniture of New England*, would have had a special significance for Green.¹³⁶ Its purchase in effect transferred one of the cornerstones of the Lyon collection to the Radeke collection, creating a firm foundation upon which to build the latter.

Another piece with a Hartford provenance sold by Green to Mrs. Radeke, and which he had known since his Trinity College days, was a “desk-highboy” (fig. 52). He had first seen it in the 1890s at the shop of William Meggat in nearby Wethersfield, Connecticut, at which time he could not afford to buy it for himself. Just before Meggat acquired the desk-highboy, it had been owned in Hartford, perhaps by the cabinetmakers and antique dealers, Robbins & Winship. Such a provenance is suggested by the striking resemblance it bears to another desk that the New Haven collector George Dudley Seymour bought from that firm about the same time, which had been much “improved” by Patrick Stevens, one of the several tal-



Fig. 52
“Desk-Highboy,” ca. 1890, probably made by Patrick Stevens in the shop of Robbins & Winship, Hartford. (Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke. 20.856)

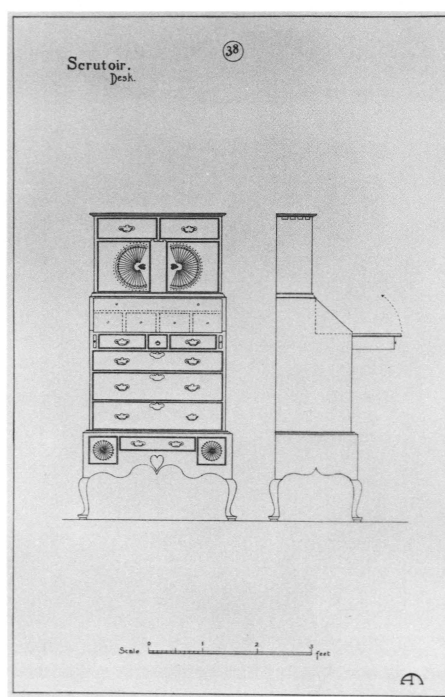


Fig. 53
Plate 38 from Alvin Crocker Nye, *Collection of Scale-drawings, Details, and Sketches of What Is Commonly Known as Colonial Furniture* (New York, 1895).



Fig. 54
Scandinavian desk-on-frame, ca. 1700. (Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke. 20.632)

ented craftsmen employed by them.¹³⁷ Alvin Crocker Nye greatly enhanced the desk-highboy's importance by illustrating it as plate 38 in his *Collection of Scale-drawings, Details, and Sketches of What is Commonly Known as Colonial Furniture*, published in New York in 1895 (fig. 53). Luke Vincent Lockwood made it even better known by including it in the revised edition of his *Colonial Furniture in America*. There he described it as the property of the dealer Miss C.M. Traver of New York, from whom Green bought it, initially for his own collection.¹³⁸ Green later decided the desk-highboy belonged in Mrs. Radeke's collection, and in the course of consummating its sale to her in 1917, noted the following in a letter:

It is illustrated in Lockwood's last books though the cut shows neither the beauty of the carving nor the richness of the wood. In my opinion it's the most beautiful thing we've yet secured. It's wholly unique and no one else will have anything like it. It is well known among collectors.¹³⁹

Of course, in retrospect, it is easy to say that Mrs. Radeke should have been alarmed by Green's emphasis on its uniqueness, let alone his use of the hybrid term "desk-highboy." Just as it implies, the piece is a highly imaginative marriage of several old parts, and a few new ones as well, for which Hartford has become noted over the past hundred years, following in the footsteps of Providence, where such activity was rampant as early as the 1840s.

Another pitfall which presented itself was Scandinavian furniture masquerading as American. The importation of great quantities of painted provincial furniture from that part of the world, not to mention Canada, appears to have begun shortly before World War I, and then picked up considerable momentum in the post-war period. The Ipswich, Massachusetts, dealer R.W. Burnham made such an extensive practice of bringing pieces over from Scandinavia that it has been said he became *persona non grata* in Sweden for having denuded that country of so much of its simple furniture and decorative accessories.¹⁴⁰ Burnham might have been the source for Mrs. Radeke's acquisition of a perfectly genuine late 17th- or early 18th-century pine slant-top desk-on-frame in old blue paint, which she had bought as American (fig. 54). Indeed, no less an authority than Wallace Nutting published it as being made in New England in his *Furniture of the Pilgrim Century*, and he very much regretted not having bought it for his own collection before Arthur Leslie Green secured it for Mrs. Radeke.¹⁴¹

Wallace Nutting had first come to Mrs. Radeke's attention while a Congregational minister in Providence, at which time he assisted at the funeral of Charles Pendleton in 1904.¹⁴² Shortly thereafter he discovered art photography, which he proceeded to turn into a highly profitable business, specializing in views showing Colonial interiors (fig. 55). He then started to collect and deal in the objects appearing in such views, and soon became a major force to reckon with in the antiques world between the wars.



Fig. 55
Wallace Nutting, *A Call for More*, hand-tinted photograph, 1916.
(Courtesy of Louis M. MacKeil)

Arthur Leslie Green attributed the rise in prices, not to mention scarcity, of antique furniture to Nutting, whom he deeply resented as a result.¹⁴³ While frequently noting his dislike of Nutting to Mrs. Radeke in their correspondence, he did have to admit that Nutting's photographs were extremely helpful and should definitely be consulted in the course of arranging the projected series of period rooms at RISD:

Have you seen Wallace Nutting's latest output of photographs[?]
He has learned a good deal. His first pictures frequently contained some anachronisms that lessened their charm. In these last pictures he has gone back to our very early period of crude furniture. There's a butterfly table that makes one's mouth water.

It's bad for us that he has bought a series of old houses & is on the lookout now for our type of furniture. Many of my obscure dealers, I find, are working in his interest. (He also has a shop filled with trash he scorns.) I wonder if his pictures and his houses will not be a help in arranging our pictures. I wish the rooms to suggest a human interest as his pictures do. I think this can be suggested without his human figures. If you have a chance to pick up small articles that will aid in securing this effect don't neglect it. A bit of half finished old needlework, some article of wearing apparel belonging to the period & left carelessly on a chair, the old book turned over to mark the place where one has been reading by the half burned candle, the child's toy – all these things will help in securing our effect. I think each room should be "staged" as it would be in a play. Most museum rooms look dead somehow and are depressing.¹⁴⁴

In keeping with the "staged" or lived-in look, Green was adamant that their furniture not be refinished, but allowed to show its age. He realized that it would therefore create a noticeable contrast with the furniture in Pendleton House, and this fact compelled him to say in a letter to Mrs. Radeke that "I fear that you are rather a beginner in the crude furniture – if I may say so – and perhaps secretly dislike its shabbiness compared with the

splendor of the Pendleton collection."¹⁴⁵

In order to give Mrs. Radeke courage in collecting simpler furniture for an art museum, Green frequently had to invoke the name of the Bolles collection at the Metropolitan Museum. Nonetheless, a dilemma existed, and not just in the mind of Mrs. Radeke, who bravely soldiered on until her death collecting what Green had the unfortunate habit of referring to as "farm-house furniture." John Maxon, for one, certainly felt there was a contradiction in showing finely crafted and designed examples alongside those which did not appear to exceed their utilitarian role, and after he became director of the Museum in 1952, he resolved it by recommending the sale of a number of pieces from the Radeke collection. Such a decision is not surprising in view of Maxon's bias for high-style furniture, which had already emerged when he came to RISD in 1946 to help recatalogue the Pendleton collection while a graduate student in art history at Harvard. Furthermore, the opportunity to display the Radeke collection appeared remote at the time, and the collection had its share of problem pieces, especially in the category of "later marriages." More significantly, however, the interest in early furniture began to wane in the 1940s with the passing of the first generation of collectors who had so enthusiastically embraced it. The deaths of Wallace Nutting, George Dudley Seymour, Dwight Blaney, and Henry Wood Erving during that decade marked a turning point in the history of collecting early American furniture. Not until the late 1950s did an interest in examples from the Pilgrim Century begin to re-emerge.

Despite the changes in attitude which have accompanied the acquisition and display of American furniture, RISD's collection has continued to grow, with each decade except the 1940s bringing one or more indisputable masterpieces to the Museum. Not only did the 1930s see the balance of the Radeke collection come by bequest, but also the Newport kneehole dressing bureau from Mary Lemoine Potter (cat. 30) and the Job Townsend labeled desk and bookcase from Mrs. Murray S. Danforth (cat. 38). The 1950s brought the bequest of a large group of 18th-century Rhode Island furniture, including a Newport chest-on-chest (cat. 32), from Miss Potter's cousin, Commander William Davis Miller, many of whose pieces had originally been gathered together by his great-uncle and pioneer collector of Colonial furniture, Thomas Mawney Potter of Kingston, Rhode Island.

The Museum's collection of Rhode Island furniture was updated during this same decade with a gift by Mr. and Mrs. Frederick Thurber of the Gorham silver and ebony lady's writing table and chair designed by William Codman for the St. Louis World's Fair of 1904 (cat. 47). Another chapter was added to the "Goddard to Gorham" story of this state's furniture in the 1960s, with the bequest by Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Lisle of a Newport six-shell desk and bookcase bearing the inscription that it was made

in 1761 by John Goddard (cat. 39). On the advice of John Kirk, and with the help of the Museum Associates, several pieces of early American furniture were also purchased, including an exceptionally large “butterfly” table (cat. 59), of which Mrs. Radeke and Arthur Leslie Green would have very much approved.

While the 1960s addressed the 17th- and 18th-century portions of the collection, the 1970s and 1980s have tended to emphasize the later 19th- and 20th-century portions, notwithstanding Harold Tarbox’s gift of a Newport tea table with claw-and-ball feet (cat. 71), and Mr. and Mrs. Frank Mauran’s gift of a Providence four-post bed in the Sheraton style from the Edward Carrington house (cat. 163). Along with these gifts, a number of labeled pieces have entered the collection by the Rawson family (cats. 12, 80, 81), who dominated cabinetmaking in Providence in the first half of the 19th century, much as the Goddards and Townsends had done in Newport in the 18th century. The eclecticism of the later 19th century can now be illustrated by two cabinets, one in the Gothic style (cat. 55), the other in the Renaissance style and labeled by Alexander Roux of New York City (cat. 54), and a sequence

of chairs in the Egyptian (cat. 136), Colonial (cat. 140), Oriental (cat. 141), and Arts and Crafts styles (cat. 142). With the acquisition of a carved chest designed and made in 1980 by RISD alumna Judy McKie for the Albert Pilavin Collection of Twentieth Century American Art (cat. 7), the RISD collection of American furniture has been brought up to date with a piece which appropriately builds on the past.

With certain exceptions, the majority of pieces that have entered the collection since the days of Charles Pendleton and Eliza Radeke have a common Rhode Island heritage, and if not actually made here, at least have histories of ownership in the state. This regional bias is largely the result of a devoted group of friends of the Museum who over the years have come to think of it as an appropriate repository for their treasured possessions. But only with the publication of this catalogue is it now possible to appreciate fully the inspiration these inheritors and collectors have received from the pioneering activities of Charles Pendleton and Eliza Radeke in the field of American furniture.

FOOTNOTES

1. Randall 1965, p. xi and cat. 40.
2. While the date “1904” appears on the spine and title page of the Pendleton catalogue, the author’s preface is dated “February 1905,” suggesting that the book did not get published until after that date. For a detailed discussion of its production, see the “Foreword” to this catalogue.
3. *Providence Journal*, August 4, 1840, p. 1.
4. *Ibid.*, July 7, 1840, p. 2.
5. *Ibid.*, September 21, 1840, p. 2.
6. *Ibid.*, July 7, 1840, p. 2.
7. The first piece of ceramics to catch Anne Allen Ives’s eye was an English figural group of an old woman on a donkey dating from the end of the 18th century and now at RISD.
8. The reprint of the *Providence Journal* editorial in the *Portland Transcript* was brought to the author’s attention by Earle Shettleworth.
9. Charlie Haigh, “The Great Brewster Chair Hoax,” *Providence Sunday Journal Magazine*, September 25, 1977, pp. 6–8, 10, 14, 17.
10. Sir Walter Scott’s history of Scotland for children titled *Tales of a Grandfather*, and published in 1828, undoubtedly inspired Hawthorne’s book. Suzy Ingersoll’s remarks appear in: James R. Mellow, *Nathaniel Hawthorne in his Times*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1980, p. 175.
11. Nathaniel Hawthorne, *Grandfather’s Chair*. Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1900, pp. xxiii–xxiv.
12. The article in the *Daily Eastern Argus* was brought to the author’s attention by Earle Shettleworth.
13. Kane 1976, pp. 29–30.
14. Jay Barry and Martha Mitchell, *A Tale of Two Centuries. A Warm and Richly Pictorial History of Brown University, 1764–1985*. Providence: Brown Alumni Monthly, 1985, p. 20.
15. Lyon 1891, pp. 148–149, 184. Although somewhat later, it should not be overlooked that Bowdoin College in Brunswick, Maine, acquired a joined great chair for its president in 1872, having previously descended in the Dennis family of Ipswich (Cooper 1980, p. 118).
16. Lyon 1891, p. 263.
17. Elizabeth McCausland, “The Life and Work of Edward Lamson Henry N.A., 1841–1919,” *New York State Museum Bulletin*, no. 339 (September 1945), pp. 160, 228, 320–21.
18. Pendleton’s book of daily expenditures and autograph book are preserved in the archives of Phillips Academy, Andover, Massachusetts, having been given to them by the RISD Museum. In the autograph book a reference made by Richard Greener concerning Pendleton’s prowess at checkers foretells his passion for poker and related games of chance as an adult.
19. Dated September 22, 1866, this letter is preserved in the Sterling Memorial Library, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut, having been given to them by the RISD Museum.

20. Pendleton's diploma from the University of Albany and letters of reference from Thurston, Ripley & Co. are kept in the RISD Museum archives. Pendleton's obituary in the *Providence Journal* (June 27, 1904, p. 2) states that he graduated from Yale College and then attended Yale Law School, suggesting that he had let the sands of time cover up the folly of his youth.
21. Stillinger 1980, pp. 208–210. Also see: Wendy Kaplan, "R.T.H. Halsey. An Ideology of Collecting American Decorative Arts," *Winterthur Portfolio*, v. 17 (Spring 1982), p. 44.
22. Stillinger 1980, p. 236.
23. Rodris Roth, "The New England, or 'Old Tyme,' Kitchen Exhibit at Nineteenth-century Fairs," in Alan Axelrod, ed., *The Colonial Revival in America*. New York and London: W.W. Norton & Co., for the H.F. duPont Winterthur Museum, 1985, pp. 159–83.
24. Christopher Monkhouse, "The Spinning Wheel as Artifact, Symbol, and Source of Design," in Kenneth L. Ames, ed., *Victorian Furniture. Essays from a Victorian Society Autumn Symposium*. Philadelphia: The Victorian Society in America, 1983, pp. 154–172.
25. Alvan Crocker Nye, "Antique Furniture in the Modern Home," *Architectural Record*, v. 7 (October–December 1897), p. 158.
26. Maxim Karolik collection, Parke-Bernet sale 2290 (June 17–19, 1964), lot 172.
27. Christopher Monkhouse, ed., *James Wells Champney, 1843–1903*. Deerfield, Massachusetts: Hilson Art Gallery, 1965, p. 28.
28. Cook 1878, p. 256. A later variant of this painting from 1889 is in the collection of Shelburne Museum and illustrated in Denker 1985, pl. 3.
29. Cook 1878, p. 162.
30. Miller 1935, p. 7.
31. *Catalogue of an Extraordinary Collection of Antique Furniture, the Property of Mr. C.L. Pendleton, F.J. Sheldon, auctioneer* (December 8–9, 1897), Providence, 1897, lot 131.
32. Owen and Jo Burt, "Walter H. Durfee. His Clocks, his Chimes, his Story," *Bulletin of the National Association of Watch and Clock Collectors, Inc.*, v. 23 (December 1981), p. 559.
33. *Ibid.*, p. 558.
34. For a recent discussion of the Jones collection, see: Anna Somers Cocks, *The Victoria and Albert Museum. The Making of a Collection*. London: Windward, 1980, pp. 80–83.
35. Stillinger 1980, p. 184.
36. Halsey 1918, pp. 251–53.
37. Yale 1980, pp. 15, 67–69.
38. "Henry Jonah Steere," *Biographical Cyclopaedia of Representative Men of Rhode Island*. Providence: National Biographical Publishing Co., 1881, v. 2, pp. 516–17.
39. "The Will of Mr. Henry J. Steere in detail," *Providence Journal*, November 1, 1889, p. 3.
40. For a discussion of Steere's intention to establish an art gallery in Providence, see the introduction in the auction catalogue, *The Art Collection of the Late Henry J. Steere, F.J. Sheldon, auctioneer* (December 9–10, 1890), Providence, 1890, p. 3.
41. *Biographical Cyclopaedia*, *op. cit.*, p. 517.
42. Karen L. Jessup, *The Architecture of Edmund R. Willson (1856–1906)*, Master's thesis, Boston University, 1983, p. 135. There it is noted that the house was appraised for \$50,000 in the Barrington tax records for 1886, "the highest for any residence in the community." All that survives is a pair of the entrance gate posts for the house, now relocated in Warren, Rhode Island.
43. *Catalogue of the Library of the Late Henry J. Steere, Esq., of Providence, R.I., C.F. Libbie & Co., auctioneers* (November 21, 1890), Boston, 1890, lot 90.
44. According to Pendleton's account book preserved in the RISD Museum archives, Pendleton sold Steere about 1886 two small carved mahogany sofas which Pendleton had previously purchased from a Mr. Otis in Lynn, Massachusetts. When Pendleton sold a number of pieces at auction in 1897 (see footnote 31), lot 64 consisted of an "extraordinary Chippendale Library Chair, from the collection of Henry J. Steere."
45. Jordy and Monkhouse 1982, pp. 7–8.
46. The auction catalogue of Steere's library (see footnote 43) lists architectural books and periodicals ranging from Robert and James Adams' *Works in Architecture* of 1773–86 (lot 3) and James Gibbs's *Book of Architecture* of 1728 (lot 151) to a complete run of the *American Architect and Building News* from 1876 to 1889 (lot 11) and G.W. Sheldon's *Artistic Country Seats* of 1886–87 (lot 24).
47. Vincent J. Scully, Jr., *The Shingle Style*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1955, pp. 149–52.
48. Built originally for the Providence merchant, Joseph Nightingale, in 1791, 357 Benefit Street was acquired about 1810 by John Carter Brown and remains in the possession of his descendants. It now serves as the home of The Nicholas Brown Foundation for the Study of American Civilization.
49. Jordy and Monkhouse 1982, pp. 151–152.
50. *Ibid.*, pp. 114–115.
51. Sotheby Parke Bernet sale 3866 (April 30–May 1, 1976), lot 490.
52. "Sale of Antiques," *Providence Journal*, December 10, 1897, p. 10.
53. Owen and Jo Burt, *op. cit.*, p. 559.
54. Gardiner 1930, pp. 78–79.
55. *Ibid.*, p. 98.
56. *Ibid.*, p. 155.
57. For example, they all had examples of Newport block-and-shell furniture, and more specifically Canfield, Perry and Pendleton each had a six-shell desk and bookcase. Canfield's ended up at the Metropolitan Museum (Heckscher 1985, no. 184), Perry's at Winterthur (Downs 1952, no. 232) and Pendleton's at RISD (cat. 40). Somewhat later, Perry's business associate, Arthur Lisle, acquired one as well, also now at RISD (cat. 39).
58. Gardiner 1930, pp. 156–157. Also see Marsden J. Perry collection, AAA-Anderson Galleries sale 4247 (April 3–4, 1936), lot 253.
59. *Ibid.*, lot 278.
60. Augusta Owen Patterson, "A Fine Old Georgian House in Providence," *Town and Country*, v. 83 (January 18, 1929), p. 42. In addition, many "duplicates" in Canfield's collection were sold by Perry at American Art Galleries, January 29, 1916.
61. *Providence Journal*, June 18, 1845, p. 2.
62. Obituary, *Providence Sunday Journal*, January 25, 1931, p. 3.
63. Marcus Binney, "Cedar Hill, East Greenwich, Rhode Island," *Country Life*, v. 179 (April 3, 1986), pp. 861–66.
64. Dowler's bill of \$5 for four plaster casts of leaves is in the RISD Museum archives.
65. "One of the Record German Houses," *Providence Board of Trade Journal*, v. 22 (October 1910), p. 438.
66. Information from Providence directories, as well as from a typed historical note attached to back of framed bill of Charles Pendleton now in the collection of Mr. and Mrs.

- Joseph K. Ott, Providence (fig. 29).
67. Nutting 1928, no. 2157.
 68. Lockwood 1904, p. 88.
 69. Breck 1918, p. 276.
 70. This chair design remained popular with collectors well into the 20th century, with the Tobey Furniture Co. of Chicago still producing copies in the 1930s, of which an armchair is in the collections of the Chicago Historical Society (1981.140).
 71. Stereographic views, showing the desk both open and closed, are kept in the object files of the American Wing. For a full discussion of the desk, see Heckscher 1985, pp. 280–82.
 72. This singular letter from Pendleton's years as a collector and dealer was kindly brought to the author's attention by Morrison Heckscher.
 73. An elaborately carved English Chippendale desk and bookcase owned by Marsden Perry had a pedimental bust of Washington, probably added by Dowler, and is illustrated in Marsden Perry collection, AAA-Anderson Galleries sale 4247 (April 3–4, 1936), lot 131. For a bookcase owned by Pendleton with a pedimental bust of Shakespeare, see footnote 93. Pendleton's bust of Beethoven appears in a photograph of his bedroom at 72 Waterman Street, and was later sold by the executor of his estate, Walter Durfee, to Mr. and Mrs. G.G. Ernst of Norwalk, Connecticut, in whose sale at the American Art Galleries (January 20–23, 1926) it was lot 543.
 74. In the unpublished catalogue of the Pendleton collection compiled by John Maxon during the summer of 1946, (a typed copy of which is kept in the RISD Museum archives), he noted that Morlock had carved the headboard in 1900.
 75. As mentioned in footnote 44, Pendleton's account book from the 1880s is kept in the RISD Museum archives.
 76. Montgomery 1966, pp. 368–69.
 77. Halsey 1918, p. 263; also see Ivins 1918, pp. 270–71.
 78. *Catalogue of the Celebrated Dr. William H. Crim Collection of Genuine Antiques*, O.A. Kirkland, auctioneer (April 22 *et seq.*, 1903), Baltimore, 1903, lot 1074.
 79. Marsden Perry collection, AAA-Anderson Galleries sale 4247 (April 3–4, 1936), lot 274.
 80. Cescinsky 1931, pls. 290–93.
 81. The three dressing tables in the Pendleton collection which have not been included in this catalogue because of over restoration are illustrated in Lockwood 1904, pls. 35, 58, 89.
 82. Ward 1977, p. 45.
 83. Adrien Wellens collection, Anderson Galleries sale 1710 (February 15–17, 1923), lot 481.
 84. Stillinger 1980, p. 72. See also Ward 1977, p. 36.
 85. Gay 1915, pp. 57–58.
 86. *Ibid.*, pp. 63–64.
 87. *Loan Exhibition, Gaspee Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution*, Providence, 1892, p. 28, no. 145.
 88. *Ibid.*, p. 5, nos. 100, 101.
 89. *Ibid.*, p. 25, no. 71. The Wilbour collection was thought important enough to warrant notice in the *New York Times* when it came onto the auction block in 1898, the sale lasting eight days (*New York Times*, November 18, 1898, p. 12).
 90. A complete file of reviews of *Colonial Furniture* is preserved in the Irving W. Lyon collection at the Joseph Downs Manuscript Library at Winterthur.
 91. Kent 1949, p. 60.
 92. *Providence Journal*, March 13, 1901, p. 10.
 93. *Catalogue of an Extraordinary Collection of Antique Furniture, the Property of Mr. C.L. Pendleton*, F.J. Sheldon, auctioneer (December 6–7, 1897), Providence, 1897, lots 45, 181.
 94. John Hutchins Cady, *The Civic and Architectural Development of Providence, 1636–1950*. Providence: The Book Shop, 1957, pp. 64, 66.
 95. According to records kept by Walter Durfee as executor of Pendleton's estate, and now in the RISD Museum archives, the high chest was sold to G.G. Ernst on February 1, 1905, for \$200. The Ernsts then lent it in 1909 to the *Hudson Fulton Exhibition* (cat. 137). In the American Art Galleries sale of the Mr. and Mrs. G.G. Ernst collection on January 20–23, 1926, it was lot 848, and apparently did not sell, as it appears again in Parke Bernet sale 622 (January 11–15, 1945), lot 610, having been consigned by Juliet Wyman Ernst.
 96. *Guidebook to Diplomatic Reception Rooms*. Washington: Department of State, 1975, pp. 25–26.
 97. Lockwood's letter is in the RISD Museum archives. Pendleton died of cancer.
 98. Clarke's letter is in the RISD Museum archives.
 99. Morse 1902, pp. 36–37, 172–73.
 100. Dating from 1914 to 1916, the correspondence between Flagler and RISD regarding the memorial plaque to Pendleton is in the RISD Museum archives.
 101. See Jessup, *op. cit.*, and Jordy and Monkhouse 1982, p. 233.
 102. The alterations to 5 East 44th Street were not completed until 1901 (Jessup, *op. cit.*, p. 179). In addition to Willson, Clarence Luce played an active architectural role in the redesign of that building, as well as other Canfield and Perry properties (Gardiner 1930, pp. 126, 274, 288–89).
 103. For a visual record of Willson's alterations to the Eliza Ward house of 1814, see the illustrated booklet titled *Auction Sale, Fine Brick House*, published by G.L. & H.J. Gross, realtors, for the sale in Providence on December 17, 1903. Much of the work in that house served as a trial run for 52 Power Street, especially in the design of the butler's pantry and "Bouguereau" bathroom, both of which were repeated almost line for line. In the course of preparing a Master's thesis on the house for Columbia University, Susan Angevin enabled the author to study it in detail during the summer of 1982, before its transferral to Brown University.
 104. Fiske Kimball, *Domestic Architecture of the American Colonies and of the Early Republic*. New York: Charles Scribner's & Sons, 1922, p. 65.
 105. Dean Lahikainen, curator of the Ropes house, provided the author with the information on Willson's 1895 alterations.
 106. A full set of Platt's working drawings for the corridor gallery (funded by Eliza Radeke to link the RISD Museum galleries with Pendleton House) is preserved, along with other drawings from the firm, at the Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library, Columbia University.
 107. *Catalogue of the Pendleton Collection*. Providence: RISD Museum, 1909, p. 4.
 108. "One of the Record German Houses," *Providence Board of Trade Journal*, v. 22 (October 1910), p. 438.
 109. *Catalogue of the Pendleton Collection, op. cit.*, p. 3.
 110. "Providence Charms Boston Architects," newspaper article presumably from the *Providence Journal* and dated in ms. "June 1907," is included in the scrapbook for 1907–12 (RISD Museum archives).
 111. Stillinger 1980, pp. 165–70.

112. Grace Slocum, "The Pendleton House – A Study in Georgian Decoration and Furnishing," *International Studio*, v. 31 (1907), pp. 55–64.
113. "Reviving the Romance of Colonial Hearths," *The House Furnisher*, January 1919, pp. 1, 4; "The Pendleton Collection," *The Antiquarian*, July 1924, pp. 22–23.
114. Arthur W. Stace, "Furniture Show of Providence Belongs in G.R.," *Grand Rapids Press*, July 26, 1918.
115. Stillinger 1980, p. 161; Kent 1949, pp. 160–61.
116. Memorandum from John Maxon to Gordon Washburn on Pendleton House, June 18, 1946, a typed copy of which is in the RISD Museum archives.
117. RISD 1985, p. 11.
118. Kent 1949, pp. 96–97.
119. Monkhouse and Sanderson 1985, p. 9.
120. ALS from Mrs. Radeke to Arthur Leslie Green, February 28, 1916 (RISD Museum archives).
121. Museum Committee, *Minutes*, October 6, 1913.
122. For Mrs. Radeke consulting Warren, see cat. 101; for Birnbaum, see Martin Birnbaum, *The Last Romantic*. New York: Twayne Publishers, 1960, pp. 86, 124, 173–74, 176, 201.
123. Una A. Hunt was a summer neighbor of Mrs. Radeke in Passaconaway, New Hampshire, as well as a jewelry designer and authoress (Charles Edward Beals, Jr., *Passaconaway in the White Mountains*. Boston: Richard G. Badger, 1916, p. 246).
124. Monkhouse and Jordy 1982, pp. 218–19.
125. Jay Cantor, *Winterthur*. New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1985, p. 171. Green's similar scheme is mentioned in a letter to Mrs. Radeke from January 1927 (RISD Museum archives). The closest RISD came to realizing such an arrangement of facades along an interior corridor can be seen in the
126. ALS from Mrs. Radeke to Green, March 30, 1916 (RISD Museum archives).
127. Davidson and Stillinger 1985, pp. 34, 111.
128. ALS from William Sumner Appleton to Norman Isham, December 1, 1920 (RHS Library, Isham papers).
129. Downing and Scully 1952, pp. 58–60, pls. 75–79. While the paneling was stored in the Breaker's stable in Newport, some of it was apparently destroyed in a fire there in May 1970. The paneling from the hall survived and has been installed in the Oliver Hazard Perry house at 29 Touro Street in Newport.
130. Isham also worked in the early 1920s with the Worcester Art Museum on a scheme to use the adjacent Salisbury house for their American wing (*Providence Evening Bulletin*, January 31, 1925, p. 6).
131. Charles B. Hosmer, Jr., *Presence of the Past*. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1965, p. 212.
132. Aldrich's name appears on several occasions in the guest book for Beauport, now kept in the Cape Ann Historical Association. In a letter to Mrs. Radeke written in October, 1929, William Cushing Loring mentions that he "gathered from talking with him [Aldrich] that he does not feel at all friendly towards Sleeper and his ideas" (RISD Museum archives).
133. Briefly in the early 1950s a second-floor room in Pendleton House had pieces from the Radeke collection on display, while in the early 1960s the basement of Pendleton House served as a "halfway house" for it.
134. Banks 1932, pp. 27–29, 56.
135. Green received his BA from Trinity in 1891, and his MA in 1894.
136. ALS from Green to Mrs. Radeke, ca. December 1916 (RISD Museum archives), includes reference to the "Disbrow" chest (cat. 1). Although he congratulated her on its acquisition, he clearly resented E.B. Leete & Co. of Guilford, Connecticut, offering it to her through Isham, rather than himself. Such resentment may well explain why Isham quickly withdrew from the scene, realizing there was room for only one advisor to Mrs. Radeke for her projected series of Colonial and Federal interiors.
137. Brainard 1958, pp. 56–57.
138. Lockwood 1921, pp. 229–30.
139. ALS from Green to Mrs. Radeke, ca. January 1917 (RISD Museum archives).
140. Dean Fales provided the author with background material on Burnham.
141. Nutting 1921, p. 116, where he noted: "It is the chagrin of the writer that he once failed to obtain this desk. Economy is often very wasteful."
142. William Carey Poland, "Tributes to C.L. Pendleton," *Providence Journal*, June 29, 1904, p. 4.
143. ALS from Green to Mrs. Radeke, ca. April 1916 (RISD Museum archives).
144. *Ibid.*
145. ALS from Green to Mrs. Radeke, ca. June 1916 (RISD Museum archives).



View from hallway into library of Pendleton's home at 72 Waterman Street, ca. 1900. (Courtesy of the Margaret Woodbury Strong Museum, Rochester)

The Catalogue

NOTES TO THE CATALOGUE

The 164 entries in this catalogue represent a comprehensive but not encyclopedic selection of American furniture in the Museum's collection. Furniture in the Pendleton and Radeke collections that has been so extensively restored or reworked that the new elements outweigh the old, outright fakes, reproductions, and those pieces whose present condition misrepresents their original appearance, have been excluded. Several of the most interesting examples, however, are discussed and illustrated in the introductory essay. Only a portion of the Windsor chairs from the Radeke collection has been included, in order to represent each major type but to avoid repetition of many similar chairs. Also absent from this volume are post-World War II production-line furniture and certain works recently commissioned by the Museum for use as gallery furniture.

Each entry is accompanied by a photograph of the object overall, as well as details of any maker's label, brand, or signature, if legible. Other inscriptions are recorded or discussed in the text.

The materials listed at the outset of each entry are generally restricted to woods, except in a few instances to describe original upholstery or a surface painted to resemble some other material. Primary woods, or those on the exterior and intended to be seen, are listed first. Secondary woods used for the interior construction and woods not visible are separated from the primary woods by a semicolon. Unless otherwise noted, the hardware is understood to be brass.

Dimensions are given in inches, with height followed by width and depth. These are overall dimensions measured at the widest points and including all moldings and finials. The seat height of chairs has been measured at the top of the front seat rail.

Details of furniture construction are not listed separately in the catalogue heading but are incorporated within the text of the accompanying entry. Likewise, notes on condition are intentionally brief, whereas significant repairs and additions are fully addressed within the entries.

Where exhibitions are accompanied by a catalogue, the entry number for that particular object is cited. Otherwise, all references are listed chronologically under "Publications." In an attempt to save space, the authors have adopted a system of short title references for related objects cited directly in the text and for recurring bibliographic references. These are listed in the Bibliography, pp. 223–28. Isolated references are given in full with any explanatory notes at the end of each entry.



1

1

CHEST, 1685–1725
Hartford County, Connecticut
Red and white oak, Southern yellow
pine, yellow-poplar, Atlantic white cedar.
24³/₄ x 41³/₄ x 17
Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke. 20.625

Provenance:

Irving W. Lyon, Hartford (by 1885);
probably to his son, Charles Woolsey
Lyon; to E.B. Leete & Co., Guilford,
Connecticut, from whom purchased by
Mrs. Radeke, 1916.

Publications:

Lyon 1891, fig. 3; Lockwood 1926, v. 1,
fig. 4; Casey 1932a, p. 39; Banks 1932,
p. 28.

Exhibitions:

Connecticut Tercentenary Exhibition,
Wadsworth Atheneum, 1935, cat. 18;
*Connecticut Furniture of the 17th and 18th
Centuries*, Wadsworth Atheneum, 1967,
cat. 20.

Condition:

The yellow-poplar top is probably origi-
nal, with a strip added at the back and its
hinges replaced. The black paint on the
molded stiles and front rails and the red
paint on the front panel frames and side
moldings were probably added in the
1880s. A till without lid was once at the
upper right. Inscribed in pencil on the
underside of the lid is "English?/March
1st 85/W. Hosmer/1WL"

The history of this chest, its attribution,
provenance, and inscriptions record one
of the earliest episodes of antique collect-
ing in this country and the subsequent
growth of scholarship in the field of
17th-century American furniture. The
chest was first published in 1891 by its
owner, Irving W. Lyon of Hartford. His
reluctance to discuss its regional origins
in his book may have derived from the
lack of documented furniture then avail-
able for comparison, and yet the pencil
inscription "English... W. Hosmer" on
the underside of the lid suggests that he
may have had other doubts. Walter
Hosmer, a Hartford cabinetmaker and
dealer who advised Lyon and his circle
of early Hartford collectors, was
probably also responsible for replacing
the brass escutcheon and repainting the
molded rails, and stiles.

In the next generation of collectors,
Luke Vincent Lockwood, inspired by
Lyon, pursued many strands of Lyon's
original research. Indeed, it was
Lockwood who first proposed a maker
for this chest. His discovery in 1923 of
a two-drawer chest inscribed with the
name of the joiner Nicholas Disbrowe led
him to attribute a wide variety of
furniture with related floral carving to
Disbrowe, an English-born joiner who
worked in Hartford from 1639 until his
death in 1683.¹ To the third (1926)
edition of his *Colonial Furniture in Amer-
ica*, Lockwood even added a separate
chapter on Disbrowe containing the fruits

of his research. Since 1958, however,
much of the work formerly associated
with Disbrowe has been reattributed to
Peter Blin of Wethersfield, and to other
regions of the Connecticut River Valley.
Today the Disbrowe inscription (though
not the two-drawer chest) is considered
a modern forgery, and subsequent
research has revealed at least twenty-
eight additional joiners who were
active in Hartford County at the same
time as Disbrowe.²

The ornament and construction of
the RISD chest are related to the approxi-
mately forty "sunflower" chests and cup-
boards made in the Wethersfield area
and associated with Peter Blin, the
second largest body of 17th-century
joined furniture after the "Hadley"
chests. The carved tulip motifs generally
resemble those on chests attributed to
Blin, as does the use of applied and
painted moldings, a refinement seldom
found on the joined chests from western
Massachusetts.³ Also characteristic of
Hartford County workmanship are rec-
tangular posts rather than pentagonal
posts commonly found on chests made
further north in Hampshire County. In
addition, the planed edges of the bottom
boards are joined with a pointed tongue
and groove joint rather than the lap
joint associated with Hampshire County
chests.⁴

Despite these features in common with
furniture attributed to Peter Blin and the
Wethersfield area in general, several

other stylistic details indicate that the RISD chest was made in a different shop, perhaps around Windsor, in northern Hartford County. The incised double moldings on the rails and stiles, for example, relate more closely to certain Massachusetts chests than to those made in the Wethersfield-Hartford area, which commonly have turned and applied balusters and bosses. The symmetrical arrangement of the carving is also much more linear than most Wethersfield "sunflower" carving. It resembles the carving on several Hartford-area variants of the "sunflower" chests and a group of chests and boxes thought to have been made in Windsor or East Windsor.⁵

The initials "HS" carved on the center panel, coincidentally the same as those on cat. 2, are not likely ever to be identified. However, because of the similarity between the carving on this chest and a box at the Metropolitan Museum with the same initials, Luther deduced that a chest and box mentioned together in a document were probably initialed "HS." Others have also considered them to be companion pieces.⁶ While chests and boxes were certainly owned together in the 17th and early 18th centuries, the differences in the carving of the petals, leaves, and stems on these two pieces suggest that they were carved by different craftsmen, if not made in different towns for two different people.

TSM

1. See Lockwood 1923, p. 119; Trent 1976, pp. 95-96, 114-15, 120; and Luther 1930, pp. 152, 154.
2. Houghton Bulkeley was the first to attribute the "sunflower" chests and cupboards to Blin. See Bulkeley 1958, pp. 17-19. For a list of contemporary joiners working in Hartford County, see Kane 1970, pp. 65-85. The Disbrowe chest is now at Bayou Bend (Warren 1975, cat. 31).
3. See, for example, Kirk 1967, cat. 15.
4. The author gratefully acknowledges the assistance of Philip Zea, who has isolated these and other construction features in the course of his research on Hampshire County joinery.
5. See Wadsworth 1985, cats. 79-80, and Benes 1982, cat. 82.
6. Kirk 1967, cat. 2. See Luther 1935, pp. 46-47. Newton Brainard believed that the MMA's box and the RISD chest were "companion pieces," but felt that Luther's deductions were "rather far-fetched." (ALS to Rudolph Berliner, June 26, 1947, in object file.)

2

JOINED CHEST WITH DRAWER,
1690-1725
Probably Hadley area, Massachusetts
Oak, pine. 35 x 43⁷/₈ x 18¹/₂
Museum Appropriation. 19.293

Provenance:
The Brooks Reed Gallery, Boston

Publications:
Nutting 1921, p. 17; Nutting 1928, no. 64 (erroneously cited as belonging to Wadsworth Atheneum); Casey 1932a, p. 41; Luther 1935, cat. 70; Kane 1975, no. 25; Landman 1975, p. 930; Watters 1981, p. 189, fig. 46; *Museum Handbook*, RISD, 1985, cat. 264.

Exhibition:
Pilgrim Tercentenary Exhibition, RISD, 1920.

Condition:
The back of the top, hinges, and cleats have been replaced. The top is old but probably not original. The drawer pulls have been replaced, and a hinged door cut into the back panel.

3

JOINED CHEST WITH DRAWER,
1690-1725
Hampshire County, Massachusetts
Oak, pine. 32¹/₂ x 46¹/₂ x 19¹/₄
Gift of the Estate of Miss Adelaide
Winthrop Vernon. 65.007

Provenance:
Amey Talbot Vernon (1834-1922),
Providence; to her three daughters, the
Misses Vernon

Publication:
Luther 1935, no. 108.

Exhibition:
D.A.R. Loan Exhibition, Rhode Island
Historical Society, 1892, cat. 110
(p. 48).

Condition:
Cleaned and refinished, probably in the
late 19th century, when the present top
and brass drawer pulls were added.

Of all the American furniture surviving from the 17th century, the 125 so-called Hadley chests made in the Connecticut River Valley between Enfield and Suffield to the south and Deerfield and Northfield to the north constitute the largest group. Decorated with distinctive shallow carvings of a repeating flower-and-leaf motif laid out with templates, the chests have come to be known generically as "Hadley" chests after Henry

Wood Erving, an early Hartford collector who found one of the chests in Hadley, Massachusetts, coined the term in 1883.¹ In a more recent study of early joiners and patronage in Hampshire County, Philip Zea has identified sixty-seven principal joiners and turners, forty of whom worked in seventeen distinct shops that produced furniture in a closely related style. To a large degree, the homogeneity of "Hadley" chests produced throughout the region reflects the taste of the Pynchon family in Springfield, their widespread patronage of dependent craftsmen and consumers, and consequent influence on the region's taste in general.²

Both RISD chests belong to the largest stylistic subdivision established by Patricia Kane, which consists of about sixty-five examples characterized by the repetition of the Hadley motif on all parts of the facade, the use of incised lines to supplement the carving, and the construction of the frame with mitered edges.³ However, the unusual border of half circles along the lower rail of the Vernon chest adds definition to the structure that is more typically obscured by floral carving, as on the HS chest. The unusually wide stiles of the Vernon chest also emphasize the structure and distinguish this chest from others within Kane's larger classification.

The distinctive style of floral carving, once thought to have been inspired by printed sources, probably derives from provincial English interpretations of Renaissance ornament found on contemporary English furniture made in southern Yorkshire, northern Lancashire, and Cheshire.⁴ The style was most likely transmitted from the North Country of England to the Connecticut River Valley by an unidentified joiner around the end of the 17th century.

According to Luther, the initials "HS" on cat. 2 probably stood for Hester Smith of Hadley, who married Nathaniel Ingram in 1696.⁵ Since Luther apparently arrived at this conclusion simply by matching the initials on chests with names on the extensive Smith family tree, rather than tracing their ownership backward from the modern owners, his genealogical attributions must remain suggestive rather than conclusive. The names of young women and their initials that appear on numerous Hadley chests do suggest that they often served as dowry chests. On many, appropriate symbols of marriage and unity emerge from the tangle of leaves and flowers. On the HS chest, for example, the joining of two leaves above the initials forms a heart.



Considering their association with the marriage and prosperity of young women, it is not surprising that some scholars have interpreted aspects of their carved ornament as derivations of Maypole decoration, the tree of life, phallic symbols, and other imagery associated with ancient fertility rites.⁶ Others have likened the paradoxical contrast between their structural solidity and surface intricacy to 17th century linguistic patterns and specifically to religious metaphors in the writings of Edward Taylor, minister of Westfield, one of whose poems was inspired by a joined chest.⁷ Whether or not one accepts such vivid iconographic interpretations of their carved decoration, there is no question that many Hadley chests were originally painted with vivid colors, an aspect of their design that is often overlooked. On one or two well-preserved examples, each of the panels, rails, and stiles is brightly painted in shades of red, purplish brown, light brown, and black, with the colors juxtaposed for maximum contrast. A more common arrangement consisted of red panels surrounded by black rails and stiles. Both RISD chests were unfortunately refinished early in this century, although the HS chest retains traces of a later green paint.

By 1892, the Vernon chest had suffered a more drastic process of refinishing and emerged as a chest of a very "different color" (fig. a). Its golden hue, new top with sharply grooved edges, and heavy brass ring pulls reflect the Arts and Crafts aesthetic of the late 19th and early 20th century that was largely inspired in

Fig. 3a
Photograph showing a portion of the 1892 *D.A.R. Loan Exhibition*, Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence, in which the Vernon Hadley chest was displayed (far right). (Private collection)



the first place by 17th century furniture. A second Hadley chest (Luther 1935, no. 26), owned in Providence by the donor's relatives who lived next door, was converted at about the same time to a fall-front desk with pigeon holes, similar brass pulls, handles, and latches to suit modern needs. Even the HS chest was partially converted for some other purpose that required a hinged door with a latch to be cut through the back of the chest.

The combined effects of the growing interest in antique furniture fostered by museums and the lingering appeal of "honest materials" and the handicraft tradition, found a natural outlet in Hadley chests and other old furniture in need of restoration. At the same time that Hadley chests such as the Vernons' were being overhauled and renewed, other amateur craftsmen such as Dr. Edwin Thorn of Deerfield were busy joining and carving completely new Hadley chests.⁸ Others including Wallace Nutting in Framingham and Walter Hosmer in Hartford were making "sunflower" chests and cupboards that evidently deceived connoisseurs in the 1930s but have since revealed themselves as modern interpretations.⁹ Like the Vernon chest, they have less to do with the 17th century than with a later era's romantic vision of its Pilgrim past.

TSM

4

CHEST WITH DRAWER, 1710–40
Central Massachusetts
Southern yellow pine; red oak, hickory.
30¾ x 47½ x 22½
Furniture Exchange Fund. 71.149

Provenance:

Robert Skinner, Bolton, Massachusetts;
Roger Bacon, Brentwood, New
Hampshire, from whom purchased

Publications:

Antiques, v. 104 (August 1973), p. 232;
Landman 1975, p. 929.

Condition:

The base molding is missing, along with pieces that were attached to the front of the left leg and beneath the central panel. Cleats at either end of the top have been replaced, eliminating the original pintle hinges. (The right pin survives.) A faint chalk inscription on the underside of the top reads: "Ephraim [?]'s/Property."

From the 17th century onward, rural New England carpenters and other less specialized craftsmen produced a variety of board chests and cupboards that provided an inexpensive alternative to joined furniture. The technique of nailing boards together to form a box or chest is much older than the joiner's trade. It required fewer skills and tools, and thus tended to persist in rural areas well beyond the introduction of furniture with dovetailed board construction. In England, such board construction had fallen within the carpenter's trade, whereas in the colonies, joiners were free to provide both kinds of chests to their customers.

In rural areas, folk traditions of painted furniture continued to evolve, as new furniture styles had less of an impact on the farmer-artisan or the average yeoman. Many vernacular chests make use of all-over planed or molded decoration that takes full advantage of the uninterrupted expanse of native pine boards, a luxury that was no longer available in England.¹ Other chests such as this one rely on elaborate painted decoration that mimics the complex join-

1. Henry Wood Erving, "Random Recollections of an Early Collector," *The Twenty-Fifth Anniversary Meeting of the Walpole Society* (Boston, 1935), p. 40.
2. Philip M. Zea, "The Fruits of Oligarchy: Patronage and Joinery in Western Massachusetts, 1630–1730." M.A. Thesis, University of Delaware, 1984, pp. 50, 53. See also Wadsworth 1985, cat. 82.
3. See Kane 1975, pp. 92, 96.
4. For printed sources, see Kane 1975, p. 81. See also Chinnery 1979, pp. 467–86.
5. Luther 1935, pp. 44–47.
6. See Richard Lawrence Greene, "Fertility Symbols on the Hadley Chests," *Antiques*, v. 112 (August 1977), pp. 250–57.
7. Watters 1981, pp. 171–72.
8. See Whitney Museum of American Art, *High Styles: Twentieth-Century American Design*. New York: The Whitney Museum and Summit Books, 1985, p. 15.
9. See Ward 1977, pp. 66–67; Trent 1976, pp. 95, 117–18, 125.



ery, inlay, and contrasting woods of urban furniture.

The piebald decoration on the front of this chest belies its relatively simple but unusual construction. The boards that frame the geometric panels are attached to a single pine board that is attached by nails to interior corner posts. The side and back boards are similarly fastened to the corner posts with large hand-wrought iron nails. Unlike a true board chest, the bottom board of the interior extends through the sides and corresponds to the molding applied across the front. The drawer front is also a single board with moldings that simulate two separate drawers. Its front and back are simply butted and nailed to the drawer sides, and the drawer slides on runners attached to the front and back posts.

The painted decoration of this chest is equally unusual. In the central panel, for example, is a painted turtle. In the center of the two octagonal panels are painted trees with symmetrical branches, surrounded by concentric bands of vigorous graining and crudely drawn branch motifs. The boards framing the three panels are brightly painted in shades of red, yellow, black, and white with additional branches and circles to fill the voids and trailing vines along the outer edges. Both ends of the chest are stained red and overpainted with black wavy lines that simulate the grain of a knotty pine board.

The method of construction with boards nailed to inner posts has few counterparts among furniture produced in New England. Several chests constructed in this manner were said to have been found by Roger Bacon in the vicinity of Marlborough, Massachusetts, and were believed by their owners to have been made locally. This style of painted decoration with trees, tendrils, and wildly grained sides also recalls the decoration on a group of early 18th-century painted chests and cupboards generally associated with Hampton, New Hampshire.² On the other hand, the unusual extension of the bottom board to form a middle molding relates to those "Hadley"-type chests made in the Springfield area, as does the use of applied moldings. The painted tendrils are likewise found on other carved and painted furniture in the Hadley chest tradition.³

The most closely related painted chest with drawer (Old Sturbridge Village) is constructed in the same manner as this chest, although its front consists of a single board painted to resemble panels.⁴ It has a similar design with three oval panels containing symmetrical trees,

yellow trailing vines along the borders, and energetic, wavy black lines on the grained end boards that are all remarkably similar to the decoration on the RISD chest. The use of a similar pintle hinge for the top further suggests that these two chests were made by the same craftsman. The Sturbridge chest was found in the Hartford area in the late 1870s and was probably made in the Connecticut River Valley long before there was sufficient interest in such furniture to account for fakery.⁵

Thus the weight of the evidence points toward the Connecticut River Valley as the origin of both the Sturbridge and RISD chests, which were probably made well into the mid-18th century and provided a visually elaborate but less costly alternative to the joined chests for which the region is better known.

TSM

1. See Hosley and Zea 1981.
2. The author is indebted to R.F. Trent for providing this information and for suggesting the connection with the Hampton group of painted chests and cupboards. See Fraser 1930; Little 1984, fig. 257.
3. See Wadsworth 1985, pp. 202–203.
4. The chest is illustrated in *Antiques*, v. 38 (October 1938), p. 214. The author gratefully acknowledges the assistance of Philip Zea, who made available his research notes and photographs of the Sturbridge chest.
5. The authenticity of the osv chest has been questioned recently by Morrison Heckscher and Harold Sack, apparently on the basis of its peculiar construction. The painted boards themselves were not questioned, but were suspected of having been taken from an old chest and reconstituted in the late 19th century.

5

SHAKESPEARE CHEST, ca. 1900
Sydney Richmond Burleigh (1853–1931), designer and decorator
Potter & Co. (1878–1910), cabinetmakers
Providence, Rhode Island
Ebonized cherry with painted panels.
21¾ x 40 x 21⅞
Gift of Ellen D. Sharpe. 28.046

Provenance:

Samuel M. Conant, Providence, Rhode Island, from whom it was purchased by the donor in 1927 for the Museum

Publications:

Davidson 1969, p. 215; *Museum Handbook*, RISD 1985, no. 282.

Exhibitions:

The Quest for Unity: American Art Between World's Fairs 1876–1893, Detroit Institute of Arts, Detroit, Michigan, 1983, cat. 92; *On the Threshold of Modern Design: The Arts and Crafts Movement in America*, Danforth Museum of Art, Framingham, Massachusetts, 1984, p. 41.

6

KING ARTHUR CHEST, ca. 1900
Sydney Richmond Burleigh (1853–1931), designer and decorator
Julia Lippitt Mauran (1860–1949), carver
Potter & Co. (1878–1910), cabinetmakers
Providence, Rhode Island
Oak with carved and painted panels.
21¾ x 40 x 21⅞
Bequest of Isaac Comstock Bates. 13.429

Exhibitions:

Arts and Crafts Exhibition, Providence Art Club, 1901, cat. 58.3; *Exhibition Commemorating the Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of the Rhode Island School of Design*, RISD Museum, 1903, cat. 284; *Ladies of Shalott: A Victorian Masterpiece and Its Contexts*, Bell Gallery, Brown University, 1985, cat. 6; *"The Art that is Life": The Arts and Crafts Movement in America, 1875–1920*, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 1987, cat. 27.

The Providence artist Sydney Burleigh had demonstrated as early as the 1880s that he could both design a piece of furniture and actually make it with his own hands, in the full spirit of the Arts and Crafts movement (cat. 142). Therefore, he may have felt he was entitled to make certain compromises by 1900, at which time he had this chest constructed (cat. 5), presumably to his own designs, but using the services of the well-established Provi-



5



Fig. 5a
Left end panel.



Fig. 5b
Right end panel.



Fig. 5c
Back panels.



6



Fig.6a
Left end panel.

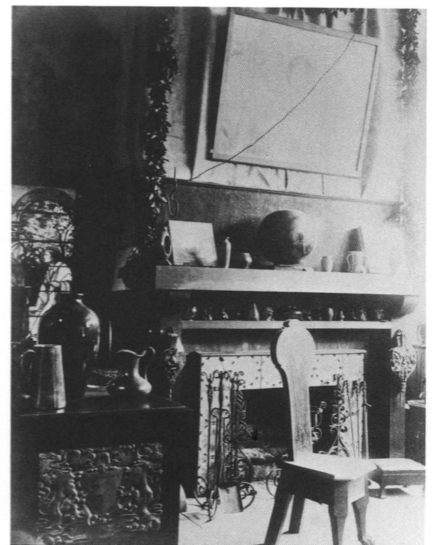


Fig. 6c
Back panels.



Fig. 6b
Right end panel.

Fig. 6d
Photograph showing a portion of the
Arts and Crafts Exhibition of 1901
installed by T.H. Pond at the Providence
Art Club. The carved chest by Burleigh
and Mauran appears at the lower left;
the bellows by Mauran hang to the right
of the fireplace. (RISD Museum archives)



dence cabinetmaking firm of Potter & Co. to fabricate it. In the process Burleigh addressed several themes of interest to the aesthetically minded in the second half of the 19th century, namely the Colonial Revival, *Japonisme*, and Pre-Raphaelitism.

In Burleigh's selection of a typical 17th-century English or American post-and-panel chest, with its straightforward mortise and tenon construction, he could well have had in mind the Connecticut example in the RISD collection (cat. 1). His appreciation for "old furniture" may have been awakened at the time of the 1876 Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia where similar pieces were displayed, or during his travels in England and on the Continent. But when Burleigh decided to have the chest made out of cherry, he deviated from its prototype, which more likely would have been made of oak.

Burleigh's reason for changing the wood can be explained by his desire to apply a black stain to part of the surface in order to simulate ebony. The dense grain of cherry is well suited to this effect. Burleigh's attraction to ebonizing dates back at least to a chest he made in 1883, inspired by the prevailing taste for Japanese design which Matthew Perry had done so much to promote when he opened up trade between Japan and the West in 1854. The first significant exhibition of Japanese objects at the 1862 London International Exhibition, along with a large display of Japanese material at the 1876 Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition and the publication of designs for Anglo-Japanese ebonized furniture in *Art Furniture Designed by Edward W. Godwin* (London, 1878), further encouraged the adoption of ebonized surfaces.

Burleigh, however, reserved the panels on the chest for paintings by his own hand. In this respect, he was following in the footsteps of the Italian Renaissance *cassone* painters by way of the English Pre-Raphaelites. In the mid-1850s William Morris, Philip Webb, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Edward Burne-Jones, and William Burges had started producing art furniture which incorporated their own panel paintings in the manner of their Renaissance forebears, but now encased in an ebonized framework.¹ The first significant example of this type of furniture to be exhibited on this side of the Atlantic again occurred at the Philadelphia Exhibition in 1876 with the display of the cabinetmakers Collinson & Lock. They showed a large ebonized cabinet with doors incorporating decorated panels similar to one at the Victoria and

Albert Museum ornamented by T.E. Collcutt.² Like the work of his English counterparts, Burleigh's paintings adhered to a flattened format, which he reinforced by bold outlining and a brightly colored palette in order to avoid any suggestion of perspective and thus any compromise of the fact that the picture was painted on a two-dimensional panel. Characters from Shakespeare's *Merry Wives of Windsor*, *As You Like It*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, and *The Merchant of Venice* served as the theme for Burleigh's panels, making the English connection with Morris and the Pre-Raphaelites even more explicit (figs. 5a, b, c). Although other American artists flirted with the idea of combining their paintings with furniture, including Will H. Low³ and Maxfield Parrish,⁴ few seem to have embraced it to the extent of Burleigh: other examples of his art furniture are now in the collections of the Henry Ford Museum and the Smithsonian Institution.⁵

English literature once again provided Burleigh with a theme for the decoration of the second post-and-panel chest he commissioned from Potter & Co., this time made out of oak (cat. 6). From the legend of King Arthur and the knights of the Round Table, Burleigh chose to illustrate on the front panels King Arthur, Queen Guinevere and a dragon symbolic of the Arthurian court (fig. 6). On the left side-panel he incorporated emblems for Sir Lancelot (fig. 6a), while on the right side-panel he made reference to Lancelot's son Sir Galahad (fig. 6b). The three back panels are decorated with emblems for Sir Galahad, Sir Percival, and Sir Tristram (fig. 6c). For the execution of the panels Burleigh took advantage of the women's woodcarving movement and enlisted the aid of one of Providence's foremost practitioners, Julia Lippitt Mauran.

Such collaborative efforts between men and women represent one of the earliest manifestations of the Arts and Crafts movement in this country, having first taken root in Cincinnati in the late 1860s under the influence of three Englishmen, the father-and-son team of Henry L. and William Fry, and Benn Pitman.⁶ The display of woodcarving by Cincinnati women at the Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia inspired women throughout the country to emulate them, including Julia Lippitt Mauran in Providence. Miss Mauran became proficient enough, in fact, to teach her own woodcarving classes in a private school in Froebel Hall on Brown Street, and these in turn led several

women to found the Providence Handicraft Club in 1904, of which Julia Lippitt Mauran was a charter member.⁷

Because of Julia Mauran's central role in the Arts and Crafts movement in Providence, she actively participated in related exhibitions, and thought enough of her King Arthur chest to let it speak for both her and Burleigh on two occasions. This included the first major Arts and Crafts exhibition ever to be held in this city, at the Providence Art Club in 1901, of which there is a photographic record of the chest *in situ*, along with a pair of oak fireplace bellows carved by her (fig. 6d). That she was not alone in her admiration of the King Arthur chest is indicated by its purchase by Isaac Bates, one of Providence's foremost collectors of contemporary American art, through whom it came to the RISD Museum by bequest in 1913, along with the rest of his distinguished collection. Therefore, when the Museum acquired a carved limewood chest made by Judy McKie in 1980 (cat. 7), Julia Lippitt Mauran's chest was already in place to serve as its historical precedent.

CPM

1. Charlotte Gere, *Morris and Company 1861–1939*. London: The Fine Arts Society Ltd., 1979, pp. 6, 8.
2. Elizabeth Aslin, *The Aesthetic Movement: Prelude to Art Nouveau*. New York: Praeger, 1969, p. 62, pl. 54.
3. Hanks and Peirce 1983, pp. 60–61.
4. *Interview*, v. 15 (August 1985), p. 21.
5. A sideboard by Burleigh is at the Henry Ford Museum (Bishop and Coblenz 1982, p. 303), while a wall cabinet is at the Smithsonian Institution (*Antiques*, v. 114 [August 1973], p. 219).
6. Kenneth R. Trapp, "To Beautify the Useful: Benn Pitman and the Women's Woodcarving Movement in Cincinnati in the Late Nineteenth Century," *Victorian Furniture*, Kenneth L. Ames, ed. Philadelphia: Victorian Society in America, 1982, pp. 173–92.
7. Obituary, *Providence Journal*, May 22, 1949, p. 3. Miss Mauran studied at RISD between 1890 and 1896.



7

CHEST, 1980
Judy Kensley McKie (b. 1944)
Cambridge, Massachusetts
Limewood. 31 x 36 x 22
Albert Pilavin Collection of Twentieth
Century American Art. 81.024

Provenance:
The artist

Publications:
Museum Notes, RISD, 1981, p. 17; *Museum
Handbook*, RISD, 1985, no. 288.

Exhibition:
A Case for Boxes, RISD Museum, 1980.

The tradition of American women enhancing the design of furniture through wood carving began in Cincinnati in the late 1860s under the direction of Benn Pitman and the father-and-son team of Henry and William Fry, and then spread throughout the country, including Providence. There Julia Lippitt Mauran took up her hammer and chisel at the turn of the century with considerable success, judging from the Museum's King Arthur chest (cat. 6). After lying dormant for a period of time, the tradition re-emerged in the 1970s in the work of Judy McKie. Unlike her predecessors, McKie not only carves her furniture, but also designs and makes it herself. And given the proficiency with which she has mortised the panels of the RISD chest into the stiles and rails, there is no question that she has mastered the



Fig. 7a
Artist's signature incised on underside of
lid, lower right corner.

art of joinery as well as the art of carving.

Initially trained as a painter, receiving her BFA from RISD in 1966, McKie discovered woodworking when she found it necessary to furnish an apartment inexpensively. What began along the lines of "butcher block" furniture soon took on new interest through the addition of carving which seems to have developed quite naturally out of her painting background.

Unlikely as it may first appear, the idea for the RISD chest grew out of a commission for a mirror incorporating cats, which ultimately turned into birds. From that modest beginning a joined chest evolved, the form based on examples of Egyptian storage chests at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston. The first chest carved with birds resembling pelicans on its top and three of its sides was made out of pine for a friend in Duxbury,

Massachusetts, in 1978. With the aid of a template, McKie then replicated the design, making three nearly identical chests out of limewood between 1979 and 1980. They include one in a private collection in Brooklyn, exhibited in *New Handmade Furniture* at the American Craft Museum in New York in 1979;¹ then this one, made for the exhibition *A Case for Boxes* at the RISD Museum in 1980 and subsequently purchased by Mr. and Mrs. Murry Robinson for the Albert Pilavin Collection of Twentieth Century American Art; and a third example for a New York collector. In 1980 she made another bird chest, this time out of walnut, as well as two variants incorporating ferns along with birds, one in walnut, and the other in limewood.² In all of these chests she has enhanced their formal properties by way of their functional requirements, incorporating the chests' handles into the arches formed by the bird feathers or fern fronds.

Such an emphasis on chests should not leave the impression that McKie has confined herself to case furniture. She has also made a wide range of tables and seating furniture, and has experimented with marquetry, most notably in a 1983 chest-on-stand with each of its drawers adorned by an interlocking fish motif. The variety of her furniture forms and techniques has also been matched by the myriad sources of motifs she draws upon for inspiration. In the catalogue for an exhibition of her furniture at the Addison Gallery of American Art, the author characterized her work as "clearly in the Egypto-Assyrian, African, Ionian, Pre-Columbian, très moderne tradition of carved sculpture."³ Elements of all these traditions can be found in this chest, along with references to American folk art and carved furniture, such as the 17th-century Hadley chest, which she particularly admires for the warmth and texture of its mellowed surfaces (cat. 2). When all of these sources are combined with Judy McKie's own imagination and talent as a woodworker, the result is a most engaging object which is both a usable piece of furniture and a striking piece of sculpture, and hence a rare synthesis of the useful and fine arts.

CPM

1. Paul J. Smith, *New Handmade Furniture*. New York: American Craft Museum, 1979, n.p.
2. Information from the artist.
3. David Spiess, *Judy Kensley McKie: Furniture/Todd McKie: Painting*. Andover, Massachusetts: Addison Gallery of American Art, 1981, n.p.

CHEST OF DRAWERS, 1690–1730

Massachusetts

Eastern white pine; red oak. 36 x 40½ x 22¾

Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke. 20.652

Provenance:

Purchased in Boston, 1917, for \$250 by Arthur Leslie Green, from whom purchased by the donor

Exhibition:

Pilgrim Tercentenary Exhibition, RISD, 1920.

Condition:

Traces of the original red paint survive on the undersides of the drawers. The chest has been refinished with a brown stain. The base molding is missing and all four feet have been replaced. The brasses are the third set to have been applied.

The chest of drawers, as opposed to chests with a drawer below, was introduced to this country by London-trained joiners who emigrated to Boston in the mid-17th century.¹ By the end of the 17th century, numerous references to chests of drawers appear in New England household inventories. They were used both upstairs in chambers and downstairs in halls and parlors. As suggested by one extraordinary “drawer-by-drawer” inventory of 1694, a chest of graduated drawers could accommodate a surprising amount and variety of clothing and textiles as well as the miscellaneous small objects that formerly were stored in boxes or in the till of a chest.² The large number of joined chests of drawers similar to this one in public and private collections today attests to their durability and their great popularity in Massachusetts at the beginning of the 18th century.³ Several chests with portions of their original painted decoration intact indicate that bright colors and a wide range of decorative techniques, from stippling and graining to painted plants and animals, enlivened the surfaces of many such chests. This example has unfortunately lost all of its original decoration, although traces of red-brown paint survive on the underside of several drawers. The surrounding moldings were probably once stained a darker color that emphasized the advancing and receding planes.

The configuration of drawers, two small between two large ones, and the pattern of the moldings applied to the drawer fronts, resemble the London-style joined chests of walnut and cedar that were being made in Boston in the 1680s. On this chest, however, each of the



four drawer fronts and side panels is actually a single pine board. Mitered moldings and beveled panels create the illusion of more complex joinery and twice the number of drawers. When painted and grained, the look of expensive, imported woods and veneers, or at least the reference to them, must have been considerably more alluring than the present muddy-brown stain, which reflects an early 20th-century interpretation of Puritans and their possessions as dour and devoid of color.

Joined chests like this one remained popular in New England well into the first half of the 18th century, despite the availability of more up-to-date wares made by local cabinetmakers. As Robert Trent has written, the arrival in Boston of London-trained cabinetmakers with their knowledge of thin, dovetailed-board construction and walnut veneers did not present an insurmountable threat to the older generation of joiners.⁴ Whereas veneered high chests of drawers in the William and Mary style were popular among well-to-do customers in Boston (see cat. 23), there was apparently

little demand for less substantially made chests of drawers in the same style. Habitually conservative Bostonians seem to have preferred these sturdy, beautifully constructed chests made by joiners, of which this painted example was a less costly variation.

TSM

1. Forman 1985, p. 30.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 16.
3. Related chests are at the Winterthur Museum (56.10.3); the Brooklyn Museum (*Antiques*, v. 110 [December 1976], p. 1292); The Metropolitan Museum (Comstock 1962, no. 64); the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (*Antiques*, v. 94 [July 1968], p. 54); Colonial Williamsburg (*Antiques*, v. 111 [May 1977], p. 910); Historic Deerfield (Fales 1976, no. 374); the North Andover Historical Society (Kettell 1929, no. 34); Chipstone (Rodriguez Roque 1984, no. 3); and in the Little collection (Little 1984, fig. 248).
4. Trent 1985, p. 43.



9

CHEST OF DRAWERS, 1760–90
Boston area, Massachusetts
Mahogany; white pine. $32\frac{3}{4} \times 38 \times 21$
Bequest of Charles L. Pendleton. 04.109

Publications:
Lockwood 1904, p. 356, pl. 87; Landman
1975, p. 931.

Condition:
Refinished in 1946. Drawer runners,
glue blocks, knee brackets (except at right
of left front leg), corner blocks, and side
base moldings all replaced in 1969.
Brasses are original.

10

CHEST OF DRAWERS, 1760–90
Boston area, Massachusetts
Mahogany; white pine. $31\frac{3}{4} \times 36 \times 21\frac{1}{2}$
Bequest of Arthur B. and Martha Lisle.
67.234

Provenance:
Ethel B. Cole Antiques, East Greenwich,
Rhode Island; from whom purchased in
1929 by Arthur B. Lisle of East
Greenwich for \$1,000

Condition:
The right front bracket foot has been
pieced, and the left rear bracket foot has
been split. The center of the third drawer
has been patched at the left of the keyhole
escutcheon.



Case furniture with shaped fronts was a specialty of Boston-area cabinetmakers, who used the general terms “swelled” or “ogee” to refer to a number of different surface treatments, including blockfront, serpentine, and bombé. Evidently inspired by aspects of English cabinetwork such as desk interiors or the drawer fronts of dressing glasses, New England cabinetmakers developed the technique beyond the native English tradition to create Baroque facades that were entirely shaped.¹ The earliest documented instance of a blockfront facade is a desk and bookcase dated 1738 by Job Coit of Boston (Winterthur: Lovell 1974, p. 91). The technique was soon adapted by Newport cabinetmakers and spread simultaneously to Connecticut, New Hampshire, New York, and elsewhere.

The large number of surviving blockfront chests indicates their enduring popularity throughout New England in the second half of the 18th century. However, they cost considerably more than an ordinary chest of drawers and tended to be commissioned by well-

to-do customers. Their costliness was due not only to the extra labor involved in shaping drawer fronts from solid boards, but also to the amount of primary wood, often imported mahogany, that was sacrificed in the process.

Blocked fronts were available in either of two shapes. Rounded fronts, as on these two chests, are less common today than flattened fronts. Both techniques created a rich surface made even richer by boards selected for their interesting grain and punctuated by large brass handles and escutcheons. The drawer pulls and escutcheons on cat. 9, for example, are among the largest and most imposing patterns available.

Carved claw-and-ball feet and straight bracket feet were two more options that are illustrated by the RISD chests. Claw-and-ball feet were obviously more expensive and required carved knee brackets as well. Straight bracket feet, by comparison, could be sawn from two boards that easily disguised the supporting blocks behind. Nevertheless, in spite of its less costly feet, the shaping of the front edge of the top on the Lisle chest of drawers is actually more complex and better executed than the top of the Pendleton chest with more expensive feet.

The overall quality of interior case and drawer construction varies markedly among the hundreds of surviving chests. The variety suggests the work of many different craftsmen who nevertheless conformed to a regional style of cabinet-making distinct from their Newport counterparts.² A comparison of the case and drawer construction of these two chests reveals several minor differences, including the ways in which the drawer runners are attached, and the cosmetic molding used along the tops of the drawer sides on cat. 9 but not on cat. 10. The typical construction of the base of cat. 9 with a large dovetail is absent from cat. 10, although the drawers on both are assembled in the typical Boston manner with the bottom boards oriented from front to back. As with the bombé chest of drawers (cat. 11), the interior construction of both blockfront chests of drawers is generally sloppy in comparison to the care lavished on the exterior, a trait that is not shared by Newport blockfront furniture.

TSM

11

CHEST OF DRAWERS, 1760–85

Boston, Massachusetts

Mahogany; white pine, yellow-poplar.

32 x 38 x 20

Bequest of Charles L. Pendleton. 04.079

Provenance:

Samuel Dexter (1725–1810); to his son Andrew Dexter (1751–1816); to his widow Mary Newton Dexter (1757–1825); to their son Samuel Dexter (1781–1862); to his widow Almira Theodosia Fenner Dexter (1793–1872); sold at auction by F.J. Sheldon, Providence (*The Dexter Collection* [March 22, 1887], lot 235); where purchased by Charles L. Pendleton

Publications:

Lockwood 1904, p. 332, pl. 81;
Lockwood 1921, Salomonsky 1931, pl. 72 (published as "Dutch"); p. 130, fig. 129;
Miller 1937, v. 1, p. 405, fig. 724;
Landman 1975, p. 934; Stillinger 1980, p. 121; *Museum Handbook*, RISD, 1985, no. 272.

Condition:

Cleaned and refinished in 1946. The drawer runners, stops and locks have all been replaced. Narrow mahogany strips have been added to the top or bottom of each drawer and the brasses raised or lowered. The right side of the third

drawer has been replaced in yellow-poplar. Large repairs to the front right corner of the top and to the molding above the front left foot.

Made only for the very wealthiest merchants and gentry of Boston and Salem, about fifty mahogany chests of drawers, chests-on-chests, desks, and desks and bookcases with swelled, kettle, or bombé bases have survived. No other furniture expresses so clearly the virtuosity of the cabinetmaker or embodies more literally the stability and well-fed prosperity of Boston's 18th-century mercantile fortunes. Just as Philadelphia highboys, Newport block-and-shell furniture, and New York City serpentine card tables were bold designs whose popularity never spread to other regions, so the taste for bombé furniture was unique to eastern Massachusetts. As a distinct group, perhaps because of its expense and rarity even in its own time, bombé furniture tends to be well documented and affords historians an unusual glimpse of one type of furniture, its owners, and makers.

The names of five Boston cabinet-makers and one from Salem have been associated with bombé case pieces, although none with double-serpentine chests of drawers. Benjamin Frothingham, George Bright, and John



1. See Lovell 1974, p. 108; Jobe and Kaye 1984, no. 14.

2. See Lovell 1974, pp. 82–89.



Fig. 11a
English gallery clock, 1763, presented
by Edward Dexter to the First Parish
Meetinghouse, Dedham. (Courtesy of
the Dedham Historical Society, Dedham,
Massachusetts)

Cogswell all signed examples of their work, whose dates range from 1753 to 1782. Two desks and bookcases have been attributed to James McMillian and to Gibbs Atkins of Boston, on the basis of family tradition and their history of ownership, and Henry Rust of Salem has been proposed as the likely maker of several related chests of drawers with distinctive knee brackets and carved shells on the skirts.¹

Although similar in their outward appearance, the chests display a number of variations in the details of their design and construction. Besides the more obvious distinctions between their ogee bracket feet and plain or carved claw-and-ball feet, three methods of drawer construction differentiate the surviving chests of drawers. In the simplest method, the sides of all the drawers are vertical, and the sides of the case have been shaped to fill the intervening space. The most difficult method consisted of curving the entire drawer side to conform with the curved sides of the chest (see cat. 41). The third method, seen on this example, falls between the two extremes of labor and expense. The drawer sides are canted but flat. The mahogany drawer fronts extend slightly beyond the sides and are shaped to fill the space between the sides of the drawer and the curved sides of the case. This method combined the advantages of quick drawer assembly with flat boards and much less room for error by shaping only a small portion of the drawer fronts. In most instances, the hasty workmanship of interior case and drawer construction contrasts sharply with the consummate skill lavished on the exterior, typical production methods in the larger cabinetmaking shops of Boston.

Another design option that distinguishes this and seven or so related chests of drawers from other bombé furniture is the double serpentine curve of the facade.² Not only do the drawers swell from side to side, but the entire front surface swells from top to bottom. The bulge of the front also corresponds to that on the sides. The combined effect of such animation in three dimensions creates an unusually complex and vivid form, whose low center of gravity bears down upon its crouching legs and whose claws appear to compress the balls within their grasp. The conscious selection of mahogany boards with a lively grain and the arrangement of the large brass handles further enhance the lines of the chest and its opulent surface. Of the seven related chests known, no two have the same combination of decorative

details such as feet, knee brackets, ornamental carving, central drop, or brasses.

The stylistic source for Boston's bombé furniture was undoubtedly either English or Dutch furniture and clocks, examples of which were owned in Boston in the 18th century. An English chest-on-chest with mirrored doors owned by Charles Apthorp, a very wealthy merchant, has been proposed as a direct prototype for Boston cabinetmakers (Vincent 1974, p. 150). They would also have been familiar with the design for a bombé desk and bookcase illustrated in Chippendale's *Director* (1754), although Frothingham's 1753 bombé desk and bookcase predates it. A Dutch desk and bookcase that belonged to the last royal governor of Massachusetts, Thomas Hutchinson, may also have helped to foster the taste in Boston for swelled-base construction (Vincent 1974, p. 153). Charles Montgomery speculated that for colonial merchants, the bombé held great attraction for its substantial qualities and for its very Englishness.³

Even a partial list of owners of bombé furniture includes such names as Hancock, Pepperrill, Derby, Storer, Greenleaf, Quincy, Ames, Atkins, and Greene, some of the wealthiest and best educated (frequently Anglican, and often loyalist) gentlemen in Massachusetts.⁴ The two most elaborate bombé chests of drawers known belonged to Gardiner Greene and Ebenezer Storer, both merchant colleagues of Samuel Dexter, for whom this chest of drawers was made. That bombé furniture was most popular among conservative merchants may account for its surprisingly late survival in this country, decades after the style had passed from fashion in England.

Samuel Dexter (1725–1810), the original owner of the R1SD chest of drawers, was also a merchant. Born in Dedham to the minister of the First Parish, Dexter did not attend Harvard College as his father had intended, but entered instead into the Boston mercantile firm of Samuel Barrett, coincidentally the owner of a monumental bombé desk and bookcase made by George Bright.⁵ He eventually went into business for himself in Boston and must have been highly successful, for he retired to Dedham at the age of 36. Shortly afterward, he built for himself in 1762 a handsome house, where he was described as living "at ease in his possessions," among which was presumably this chest of drawers.⁶ An English gallery clock that Dexter presented to the First Parish Meetinghouse of Dedham in 1764 provides

further evidence of his taste for elaborate furnishings (fig. a).

Samuel Dexter devoted the rest of his life to contemplation of the Scriptures, gradually secluding himself from family and friends. He ultimately bequeathed the bulk of his estate to Harvard to endow a professorship in sacred literature. His will, a thirty-seven-page sermon in itself on the temporal value of earthly possessions, mentions only household furniture, a portrait, and a silver cann.⁷ This chest of drawers descended through his merchant son to his grandson and namesake, a graduate of Brown University (1801) and an amateur naturalist whose third wife was Almira T. Fenner, daughter of Gov. James Fenner of Rhode Island. Throughout the 19th century, the chest formed part of the furnishings of the imposing Fenner House at 119 Governor Street overlooking the Seekonk River.

The 1887 sale of the Governor Street house by the Dexter and Fenner heirs was a highly celebrated event in Providence. According to the *Providence Journal*, this sale offered "a rare opportunity to parties interested in Antique Furniture to obtain pieces that have a historical interest to every Rhode Islander."⁸ Described in the room-by-room sale catalogue as an "antique, small [sic] front, brass trimmed Mahogany Bureau. Very ancient, claw-and-ball feet. Hon. Samuel Dexter," it stood in the second floor entry with other furniture that "belonged to some remote Fenner ancestor." Judging from other chests in the same sale that are described as "swell front," a period term for any type of blockfront, serpentine, or bombé form, the odd term "small front" is probably a typographical error.⁹ Pendleton purchased the chest for \$55, in addition to a large blue and white tea caddy and a pair of Chinese Export urns that had belonged to Gov. James Fenner. As one of the very few items in the Pendleton collection whose history can be documented from the 18th century, it is fitting that this chest of drawers should have come from such a celebrated sale with strong local associations and one that took place at the height of Pendleton's career as a collector.

TSM

- American Foundation (*Antiques*, v. 25 [May 1984], p. 1100; Karolik Collection (Hipkiss 1941, no. 35); Winterthur (Downs 1952, no. 165); Cluett Collection (*Girl Scouts Loan Exhibition*, no. 631); and illustrated in *Antiques*, v. 102 (December 1972), p. 945, and *Antiques*, v. 39 (March 1941), inside cover.
3. See Vincent 1974, p. 150; Montgomery and Kane 1976, p. 59.
4. For the furniture owned by loyalists in Boston and Cambridge, see Mabel M. Swan, "Furniture of the Boston Tories," *Antiques*, v. 41 (March 1942), pp. 186–189.
5. The most complete biography of Dexter is Carlton Albert Staples, "Samuel Dexter," *The Dedham Historical Register* v. 3 (April 1892), 45–60. See also Orrando Perry Dexter, *Dexter Genealogy: 1672–1904*. New York: J.J. Little and Co., 1904, pp. 52–58. The work of George Bright is recorded in Richard H. Randall, Jr., "George Bright, Cabinetmaker," *The Art Quarterly*, v. 27 (1964), pp. 134–147.
6. Dexter, *op. cit.*, p. 55. The Dexter House appears in Staples, *op. cit.*, opposite p. 48.
7. Worcester County Probate Registry, *Wills and Partitions*, vol. 39 (1809–1811), pp. 391–406. Dexter's portrait is illustrated in Staples, *op. cit.* opposite p. 45.
8. *The Providence Journal*, Saturday, March 19, 1887, p. 5.
9. *Catalogue of the Dexter Collection of Antique Household Furniture*, F.J. Sheldon, auctioneer (March 22, 1887), Providence, 1887, p. 12.

12

CHEST OF DRAWERS, ca. 1806
Joseph Rawson, Sr. (1760–1835)
Providence, Rhode Island
Mahogany with mahogany veneer and light wood inlay; chestnut. 37 x 45 x 22
Abby Rockefeller Mauzé Fund. 78.146

Provenance:

Acquired in the early 20th century by Burr Wallace Freer, Belvedere Island, Marin County, California; by bequest in 1951 to his daughter, Mrs. Mary Freer Nussdorfer, Bath, Ohio; by bequest in 1977 to her daughter, Mrs. Mary N. Hennessy, Northfield, Massachusetts

Publications:

Monkhouse 1980, p. 127; *Museum Notes*, RISD, 1980, pp. 12–13.

As the maker of this serpentine chest of drawers, Joseph Rawson not only showed himself to be an able interpreter of the designs of George Hepplewhite, in this instance plate 76 in his *Cabinet-Maker and Upholsterer's Guide* (London, 1794), but also capable of making modifications which enhance the design still further. At the base Rawson extended the height and splay of the French bracket feet, and punctuated the serpentine skirt with the addition of a circular cutout. Through the application of carefully matched figured mahogany veneers he developed an interplay of light and dark contrasts which further dramatized the already pronounced swell of the serpentine front. In the process, Rawson created one of the most arresting and aesthetically successful chests of drawers to be made in America during the Federal period. Furthermore, this achievement did not go unrecognized in Providence, as shown by the existence of three virtually identical serpentine chests of drawers, and three closely related round or bowed ones, similar in every detail save for the shape of the fronts.¹

Such a corpus of chests clearly suggests that Joseph Rawson had a large and well-organized shop. This is borne out by records still owned by Rawson descendants indicating that he had twenty-five apprentices working for him in 1800 (Monahan 1980, p. 137). In fact, if it were not for the variations in veneers and string inlays Rawson employed, these chests would appear to have been made on an assembly line, so close are they in design, proportion, and construction: even the oval brass drawer handles are identical on all seven chests. That these chests were made in close succession is further reinforced by the fact that two

1. See Vincent 1974, pp. 148, 184–86, and 192–94.

2. The other related bombé chests with double-serpentine fronts are in the collections of the U.S. State Department (MFA 1975, p. 76); The Dietrich

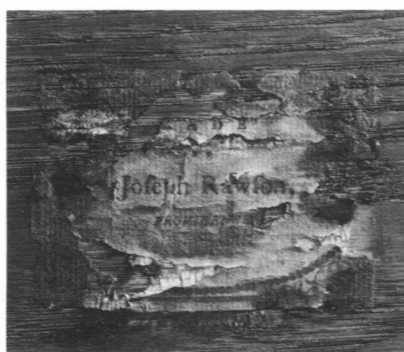


Fig. 12a
Cabinetmaker's label on back of chest.

are dated 1806, including the serpentine example at the Carnegie Institute in Pittsburgh. At the same time, however, the shop was versatile enough to be able to cater to the tastes of more conservative customers, as seen in a straight-front chest of drawers with ogee bracket feet which could have been made in 1770 (Ott 1965, pp. 80–81). Yet it bears the very same label as the serpentine and round chests (fig. a.), indicating that it was made along with them in the first decade of the 19th century.

In addition to a large shop capable of producing such ambitious furniture, Rawson clearly had a number of wealthy

patrons to purchase his designs. According to the *New York Book of Prices* for 1796, a serpentine chest of drawers cost twice as much to make as a straight-front chest (Montgomery 1966, p. 182). Although it is not specifically known for whom any of the four serpentine and three round-front chests were made, there is a bill of 1811 from Joseph Rawson to one of the great China Trade merchants living in Providence, Edward Carrington, for a "Sweld front mahogany bureau" for \$30 (Ott 1982, p. 1160). In 1826 there is another bill from the Rawson firm to Benjamin Harris for "one swelled front mahogany bureau for \$40," (Monahan 1965, p. 579) suggesting the continuing popularity of the form, and also the continuing rise of prices.

CPM

1. Of the three other serpentine chests, one is in a private collection, another one dated 1806 is in the Museum of Art, Carnegie Institute, Pittsburgh, (Monahan 1980, p. 137) and the last example was advertised for sale (*Antiques*, v. 123 [April 1983], p. 727). Of the round-front chests, all three are in private collections, of which one has been illustrated (Monahan 1980, p. 137).

13

DRESSING GLASS, ca. 1800

Probably Providence, Rhode Island
Mahogany, with mahogany, maple and other light wood veneers; yellow-poplar, cedar and pine. 22 $\frac{7}{8}$ x 18 $\frac{7}{8}$ x 8 $\frac{7}{8}$

Gift of the Estate of Mrs. Elisha Dyer.

22.040

Provenance:

Probably descended in the Dyer family of Providence

Publications:

Ott 1965, pp. 130–31, Monahan 1965, p. 579.

Exhibition:

The John Brown House Loan Exhibition of Rhode Island Furniture, Rhode Island Historical Society, 1965, cat. 85.

Condition:

The present diamond-shaped keyhole escutcheon, and a patch adjacent to the lock, are the result of an early attempt to open the center drawer without the key. An ivory drawer pull is missing, and there is some loss of veneer.

Before the Revolution, dressing or toilet glasses were more often than not imported, especially from England. Beginning in the Federal period, however, they were made in large numbers on this side of the Atlantic, and several labeled examples have survived, including ones by James Todd of Portland (Portland Museum of Art), Stephen Badlam, Jr. of Boston (Montgomery 1966, no. 253) and Peter Grinnell and Son of Providence (New Jersey State Museum, Trenton). While this unlabeled example came to the RISD Museum in 1921 as "English," and is very close to a design for a dressing glass reproduced as plate 71 in George Hepplewhite's pattern book, *The Cabinet-Maker and Upholsterer's Guide* (London, 1794), the fact that its drawers are made out of cedar and yellow-poplar rather than oak, certainly suggests Rhode Island as its origin. Furthermore, "Prov." is inscribed in blue chalk on the back of the right-hand drawer, presumably for Providence, and the family of the donor has been closely associated with the city since the end of the 18th century. The use of bone drawer pulls and bone rosettes on the stiles supporting the mirror also recalls the frequent use of ivory on furniture by Providence cabinetmakers, of which there are three examples in the Museum's collection (cats. 14, 35, 163). However, the dressing glass is the one instance in English furniture where bone frequently

appears as a decorative mount, and an example imported from England may well have served as the source of inspiration for RISD's dressing glass, as well as the more ambitious Providence case furniture incorporating ivory.

The original owner of this dressing glass could have been Elisha Dyer (1772–1854), who was a successful dry-goods merchant in Providence when he married Frances Jones in 1801. As marriage is a likely occasion for the purchase of new furniture, it is possible that this dressing glass was acquired at that time.

CPM



13

14

DRESSING BUREAU, ca. 1813
Attributed to Joseph Rawson, Sr. (1760–1835)

Providence, Rhode Island
Mahogany with mahogany, rosewood and light wood veneers; chestnut and yellow-poplar. 72 x 38 x 21

Mary B. Jackson Fund and Furniture Exchange Fund. 77.020

Provenance:
Matthew Perry family by descent; Shreve, Crump & Low, Boston

Publications:
Monkhouse 1980, p. 127; *Museum Handbook*, RISD, 1985, p. 322.

Condition:
Shreve, Crump & Low in 1976 had the legs restored from just below the ball turnings and had a missing ivory rosette reproduced.

Toilet glasses comparable to the preceding example went out of fashion in the first half of the 19th century for the very reasons suggested by Eliza Leslie in her *House Book or, A Manual of Domestic Economy* (Philadelphia, 1840):

The small movable looking glasses, standing on feet, are much out of favour for dressing tables, as they scarcely show more than your head, and are easily upset. (p. 300)

One solution to the problem was to enlarge the toilet glass and its attached drawers, and then join them to the bureau with the assistance of applied moldings. Through this union a new form of furniture, the dressing bureau, came into existence, and the credit for its development in America seems to be shared among Boston, Salem, and Providence.

This example has a Rhode Island provenance, having descended in the family of Matthew Perry, the younger brother of Oliver Hazard Perry. It is nearly identical to one in a private collection that bears a manuscript label stating that it was made by Joseph Rawson as part of Mary Wheaton's dowry when she married Thomas Rivers of Charleston, South Carolina, on November 3, 1813.¹ In support of that documentation is the use of chestnut and yellow-poplar as the secondary woods for both of the bureaus, and ivory for their drawer pulls, keyhole escutcheons, and urn-shaped finials on the stiles supporting the mirrors. The only notable difference is that the Museum's dressing bureau is enlivened



14

by additional ivory rosettes affixed to the C-scroll brackets which give further support to the mirror, while in the example belonging to Mary Rivers they are executed in mahogany.

The one aspect of these dressing bureaus which suggests Boston workmanship is the lunette or semi-circular inlays which embellish their skirts. For many years such inlays were assumed to be the trademark of John and Thomas Seymour. More recent research, however, has demonstrated that inlays as a rule were fabricated in specialized shops, and in Boston the stringer John Dewhurst

seems to have served as the main source of supply (Stoneman 1965, p. 587). Thus available to virtually anyone, the lunette inlay on these two dressing bureaus indicates that it was sold to cabinetmakers working as far afield as Providence.

In much the same way that Boston appears to have served as a distribution center for certain distinctive inlays, Providence may have played a similar role in the distribution of ivory. In his advertisement in the *Providence Gazette* for March 7, 1812, Thomas Howard mentioned that he had for sale "600 Ivory Knobs, on a new and improved

Plan, warranted" (Garrett 1966, p. 517). The ivory knobs found on a bow-front chest of drawers by Spooner & Fitch of Athol, Massachusetts, might well be an example of ivory purchased from Howard in Providence.² Aside from this dressing bureau attributed to Joseph Rawson, RISD has three other pieces of Providence furniture which incorporate ivory (cats. 13, 35, 163), suggesting that it found particular favor with local cabinetmakers. The latter could also take advantage of Isaac Greenwood, who specialized in ivory turning, ranging from billiard balls to "neat wood and ivory cases" (Ott 1969b, p. 117).

As for the later history of the RISD dressing bureau, when it inevitably fell out of fashion it had its legs cut off just below the ball turnings in order to be fitted into a low-studded room, not unlike the Job Townsend desk and bookcase (cat. 38). It may well have been relegated to a sewing room, which would account for the marking ink that stains its surface, and the ivory button that replaced one of the ivory rosettes on the C-scroll brackets. When the dressing bureau was purchased from Perry descendants living in California by Shreve, Crump & Low of Boston, they had the legs restored on the basis of Mary Rivers's bureau, and they found a latter-day ivory turner to replace the button with an ivory rosette which is virtually indistinguishable from its neighbors.

CPM

1. Monahan 1980, p. 140. A third closely related dressing bureau was made for Gov. William Jones (1753–1833) of Rhode Island and descended in his family until presented to the White House in 1962.
2. *Antiques*, v. 62 (October 1952), p. 263.

CORNER BASIN STAND, 1800–10

Possibly eastern Massachusetts

Mahogany with mahogany and light wood veneers; pine. 46½ x 27½ x 15

Gift of the Estate of Mrs. Gustav Radeke.

31.610

Provenance:

Arthur Leslie Green, Newport, Rhode Island, from whom purchased by the donor

Condition:

Conserved in 1985 by a grant from the Institute for Museum Services, at the SPNEA Conservation Center, Waltham, Massachusetts, under the supervision of Robert Mussey.

In 1788 the first two designs for corner basin stands appeared almost simultaneously in *The London Cabinet-Makers' Book of Prices and Designs of Cabinet Work* (pl. 12), and George Hepplewhite's *Cabinet-Maker and Upholsterer's Guide* (pl. 83). They were intended to replace the more precarious tripod basin stands shown in Thomas Chippendale's *Gentleman and Cabinet-Maker's Director* (1754; pl. 55), or, to quote from the text accompanying Hepplewhite's plate: "This is a very useful shape, as it stands in a corner out of the way." The basic features of this new basin stand included a shaped splash board enclosing on two sides a top with circular cutouts for the wash basin, soap dish, etc. Midway down was a case containing one real and two sham drawers, and finally a triangular shelf serving as a stretcher between the legs and as a support for the water bottle contained within an applied wooden ring. While RISD's corner basin stand exhibits all these features, it also incorporates certain refinements which indicate that its maker was not using the above pattern books, but was consulting Thomas Sheraton's even more up-to-date *Cabinet-Maker and Upholsterer's Drawing Book* (1793; pl. 42).

Sheraton's improvements on Hepplewhite's design included the addition of a quadrant shelf attached to the splash-board, as well as a slight splay towards the base of the legs for "the two front ones to spring forward, to keep them from tumbling over," in Sheraton's words (Montgomery 1966, p. 378). He also reshaped the triangular shelf by scooping out the sides. While this definitely gave the shelf a more graceful profile, it was at the expense of its structural role as a brace for the legs and as a support for the water bottle. As a result, the shelf has rarely survived without the need for additional

bracing, as in the case of RISD's basin stand.

Coming into the Museum without a history, the RISD corner basin stand offers little in the way of additional evidence to suggest where it might have been made. Pine for the secondary wood and simple string inlays are not particularly helpful. Often eastern Massachusetts is given as a source for similar stands based on several documented examples coming from that region, such as one at Winterthur labeled by Jacob Forster of Charlestown, Massachusetts (Montgomery 1966, p. 378). When an example was encountered in a best chamber in Newburyport at the

beginning of the 19th century, it was thought noteworthy by Sarah Anna Emery, who wrote afterwards, "...there was a novelty, the first wash-stand I ever saw, a pretty triangular one of mahogany, a light graceful pattern to fit into a corner of the room."¹

CPM

1. Sarah Anna Emery, *Reminiscences of a Nonagenarian* (Newburyport, Massachusetts, 1879), p. 32.





16

16

BASIN STAND, 1830–40
Probably Boston, Massachusetts
Mahogany with mahogany veneer; pine.
34½ x 20 x 19
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. A. Trowbridge
Horton. 77.072

Provenance:
Descended in Mrs. Horton's family in
Boston in the 19th century

Although the pattern books of George Hepplewhite and Thomas Sheraton illustrate basin stands nearly identical to the one just discussed (cat. 15), they also include examples with lids. In Sheraton's accompanying text, he observed that "the advantage of this kind of basin stand is, that they may stand in a genteel room without giving offence to the eye, their appearance being somewhat like a cabinet" (Sheraton 1793, pp. 91–92). Such camouflaged or "deception" furniture proved to be increasingly popular, especially in urban settings where space was at a premium. RISD's enclosed basin stand has a history of ownership in Boston in the 19th century, and it may

well have been used in a lady's bedroom which doubled as her sitting room; hence the desirability of having the bowl and pitcher, not to mention the chamber pot, out of sight. With the lid lowered to conceal the circular cutout for the basin, and with the revolving cylinder for the pitcher and chamber pot turned to exhibit its solid front, the basin stand would appear to be nothing more than a bedside table.

The source of design for the RISD stand, and a closely related example in the collection of James Goode (Fitzgerald 1982, p. 125), could well be the pedestals incorporated into Neo-classical sideboards dating from the first third of the 19th century.² Described in price books as "pedestal end sideboards," a representative example in the Museum of the City of New York shares with these two basin stands rounded veneered fronts flanked by columns which in turn are supported on turned feet (MMA 1970, no. 73). Furthermore, regarding their function, Hepplewhite noted that while one sideboard pedestal "serves as a plate-warmer, ... the other pedestal is used as a pot cupboard" (Hepplewhite 1794, p. 7).
CPM

17

NIGHT STAND, 1841 (part of a suite)
James Sharp (1790–1873)
Boston and Watertown, Massachusetts
Pine with painted decoration. 27¼ x
14¾ x 14½
Promised gift of Mr. Peter W. Eliot

Provenance:
"Miss K.B. Upham, Ogunquit, Maine,"
according to late 19th-century luggage
label affixed to the back of the commode
and chest of drawers; Corey Daniels,
Wells, Maine

Condition:
The painted decoration was conserved
by Alice K. Miles, Providence, Rhode
Island, in May 1986.

One of the principal arbiters of taste in mid-19th-century America, Andrew Jackson Downing, drew attention to Boston as *the* source for superior sets of painted cottage furniture when he cited and illustrated examples manufactured by Edward Hennessey in his book *The Architecture of Country Houses* (New York, 1850):

As successful attempts at cottage furniture now made in this country, we may call attention to the complete sets of *chamber or bed-room furniture*, got up at the manufactory of Edward Hennessey, 49 and 51 Brattle Street, Boston ... This furniture is remarkable for its combination of lightness and strength, and its essentially cottage-like character. It is very highly finished, and is usually painted drab, white, gray, a delicate lilac, or a fine blue—the surface polished and hard, like enamel. Some of the better sets have groups of flowers or other designs painted upon them with artistic skill. (pp. 415–416)

While Downing was silent on the subject of another Boston manufacturer of painted cottage furniture, James Sharp, the quality of Sharp's ornamental work is clearly expressed in this night stand, or "zomno" to use the alternative term found in *The Architecture of Country Houses*. Made *en suite* with a bed, chest of drawers, marble-top commode, tilt-top table and side chair (cat. 133), each piece is decorated with a beautiful and highly naturalistic still life of flowers masterfully set into a deep niche with the aid of *trompe l'oeil* effects of light and shadow. As a clear indication that Sharp did not underestimate the quality of his work, he signed the footboard of the bed "J. Sharp 1841" in shaded block letters reminiscent



17



Fig. 17a
Artist's signature located at the bottom center of headboard from bed *en suite* with night stand and chair (cat. 133).

of a sign painter's (fig. a). By contrast, the painted furniture manufactured by Edward Hennessey appears to have gone unsigned.

The only other comparable set of cottage furniture by Sharp that has thus far come to light consists of a bed, chest of drawers, and a tilt-top table, the latter signed and dated "J. Sharp 1869" (Fairbanks and Bates 1981, p. 410). The set was acquired in that year by the Robert Treat Paines for their newly erected country house in Waltham, Massachusetts, and is still *in situ*. There is also another tilt-top table identical in its design and decoration to the Paine example, and very similar to the one in the set at RISD, signed and dated "J. Sharp 1868" (*Art & Antiques*, v. 4 [July-August 1981], p. 33). Finally, a still life on wooden panel is signed and dated "J. Sharp, Watertown, 1865" (Sotheby Parke Bernet, sale 4583 M [April 23, 1981], lot 16).¹

A precedent for such accomplished *trompe l'oeil* still life decoration on furniture in the Boston area is the work of John Ritto Penniman (1782–1841).² Nobody on this side of the Atlantic translated the ornamental designs for painted furniture

shown in George Hepplewhite's *The Cabinet-Maker and Upholsterer's Guide* (London, 1794) and Thomas Sheraton's *Cabinet-Maker and Upholster's Drawing-Book* (London, 1793) with more memorable results than Penniman. His still life of six shells on a bed of leaves painted on the top of a lunette commode made by Thomas Seymour in 1809 for Elizabeth Derby, and now at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, is the outstanding example (Fales 1972, p. 94). A similar signed still life of a single shell on a bed of leaves painted on the top of a bird's-eye maple work box could be said to run a close second (MFA 1975, p. 171).

Boston directories show that James Sharp was making and ornamenting furniture by 1820, and he continues to be listed in that dual capacity through 1838, with a brief alliance in 1832 with the Boston cabinet- and chairmakers Cornelius Briggs and George A. Brewer.³ It is therefore logical to conclude that he not only knew Penniman, but had been directly inspired by his talents as an ornamental painter. While Penniman may have been at the peak of his career as an ornamental painter when he decorated the Derby commode in 1809, he still

advertised himself as an ornamental painter in Boston in the 1820s, as well as a portrait and landscape painter; beginning in 1825 he also worked for the Pendleton Lithographic Press. However, drink finally took its toll and shortened his artistic career, unlike James Sharp's, which would span at least fifty years and leave behind a legacy of ornamented furniture which draws a very fine line between the decorative and fine arts.

CPM

1. Aside from decorating furniture, Sharp's obituary noted that he also executed "paintings of flowers, a work in which he excelled, and of which he was very fond." It also mentioned that "two of his paintings are now on exhibition at the store of Messrs. Williams & Everett" (*Watertown Press*, July 11, 1873, p. 2).
2. Carol Damon Andrews, "John Ritto Penniman (1782–1841), an Ingenious New England Artist," *Antiques*, v. 120 (July 1981), pp. 147–70.
3. Again according to Sharp's obituary, "Messrs. Chickering received their first order for cabinet work at his

hand," presumably a case for a square pianoforte around 1823 when Jonas Chickering made his first piano in Boston (Nancy A. Smith, "Boston Nineteenth Century Pianoforte Manufacture: The Contributions of Jonas Chickering," *Victorian Furniture: Essays from a Victorian Society Autumn Symposium*, Kenneth L. Ames, ed. [Philadelphia: Victorian Society in America, 1982], pp. 104–13). As Sharp was the oldest member of the Handel and Haydn Choral Society at the time of his death, pianos would have had a special appeal for him. Later in his career, probably after he left Boston for Watertown around 1840, Sharp ceased to manufacture furniture, concentrating instead on its ornamentation, especially for Messrs. Paul & Co., a well-known Boston firm of cabinetmakers, upholsterers, and interior decorators, who were active from the 1840s until at least the 1870s. Like Hennessey, Paul was singled out for praise by Downing in *The Architecture of Country Houses* (p. 412). It is quite possible that Paul & Co. made the actual suite of bedroom furniture at RISD, for which Sharp then supplied the decoration.



18

18

DOLL'S CHEST OF DRAWERS, 1843
New England
Mahogany; pine. $7\frac{1}{4} \times 7 \times 4\frac{3}{4}$
Farago Art Fund. 83.210

Provenance:

M.E. Talcott to her granddaughter,
Helena Talcott, April 28, 1843; Nathan
Liverant & Son, Colchester, Connec-
ticut, 1983

When great care has been taken with the design and construction of a piece of miniature furniture, as in the case of this Empire mahogany chest of drawers, it is tempting to think of it as a cabinetmaker's model or an apprentice's masterpiece. Why else would the unknown cabinetmaker or apprentice have gone to so much trouble to hand turn each drawer knob and carefully dovetail each drawer? However, a different motive is revealed by an ink inscription found on the inside of the top drawer of the lower section. It reads as follows: "To Sarah Helena Talcott, from her/Grandmother M E Talcott, on her first birthday/, April 28, 1843." As further evidence that miniature chests of drawers were intended for children's use, there is a handsome

example on a somewhat larger scale in the McLellan-Sweat Mansion, Portland Museum of Art, Portland, Maine. Executed in the Sheraton style, with turned and carved posts flanking its front, and enhanced by the addition of brass drawer knobs and rosettes, along with flamed mahogany veneer, the chest also has an inscription in one of its drawers left by the original owner, Margaret Mussey Sweat. She noted that it was made for her in 1830 by George Tappan of Newburyport, Massachusetts, "and sent to me to keep my doll's clothes in."

The RISD chest of drawers with its bold bracket feet supporting a case of three long drawers, below a stepped tier of two smaller drawers, illustrates a design which enjoyed great popularity in the grown-up world of the 1840s. That design had its life extended into the 1850s and even later as part of inexpensive painted-pine bedroom sets known as "cottage furniture." Andrew Jackson Downing did much to popularize this type of furniture by recommending it in his widely read book, *The Architecture of Country Houses*, the first edition of which appeared in 1850.

CPM

COLLECTION BOX, 1835–45

Westerly, Rhode Island

Pine painted to resemble mahogany, with yellow freehand decoration. 2 x 10 x 4
Abby Rockefeller Mauzé Fund. 79.023

Provenance:

First Baptist Church of Westerly; Rev.
Frederic Denison; Westerly Public
Library

Publications:

Monkhouse 1980, p. 130; Little 1980,
pp. 188–91.

Condition:

Two interior dividers no longer exist.

Collection boxes for ecclesiastical purposes in America would appear to have been rather rudimentary affairs, judging from the late 18th-century poor box from St. Michael's Church, Marblehead, Massachusetts, that represented this aspect of church furnishings in the exhibition *New England Meeting House and Church: 1630–1850* at the Currier Gallery of Art, Manchester, New Hampshire, in 1979.¹ As that example consists of six thick boards held together by screws, with the back board exhibiting a simple trefoil cutout as the only form of ornament, Rhode Island may be unusual in having at least two examples of collection boxes that show far greater care in their design and execution.

The earliest of these actually consists of a pair of mahogany boxes which seem to have been part of the original furnishings for Touro Synagogue in Newport and date between 1759 and 1765.² Attached to the columns just inside the entrance, the boxes have concave backs and convex fronts in order to follow the curve of the columns. In keeping with

the carefully selected straight-grained mahogany and nicely executed dovetails, the surface ornament consists of silver keyhole escutcheons of the "Chippendale" type and silver rectangular labels engraved in block letters with the words "Charity Box." By contrast, the other collection box, from the First Baptist Church in Westerly, is made from a solid piece of pine. However, its scalloped profile and decorated surface more than compensate for its lack of joinery and plain materials.

The First Baptist Church of Westerly gathered in 1835, at which time the collection box now at RISD may have been made. As its cover is designed to slide from the back, its contents cannot be removed without unscrewing the box from the wall. The lively freehand decoration indicates the work of a decorative painter well versed in ornamenting "fancy" furniture, or perhaps even carriages and coaches. The three eagles which emblazon the three lobes of the box initially bring to mind the increasing acceptance of the bald eagle as our national symbol during the Federal period. But in an ecclesiastical context the eagle's republican references are of less importance in comparison to its Christian connotations.

In the eyes of the church the eagle is associated with the cleansing sacrament of baptism, based on the ancient belief that the eagle when old renewed his energies by flying upwards toward the sun three times, followed by three plunges into the cooling waters of the ocean. Upon the third immersion the eagle arose purified, and with the power of his youth fully restored. In addition, the eagle is the symbol of St. John the Evangelist, who is traditionally said to have written the Gospel bearing his

name, three Epistles, and the Book of Revelation. The eagle's dual role as a symbol of baptism and St. John made it highly appropriate for use as an image on a collection box raising funds for the work in Burma of the American Baptist missionary Adoniram Judson (1788–1850), including his translation of the Bible into Burmese. The inscriptions on the banderoles borne in the beaks of each of the eagles, "Indian," "Translation," and "Judson," make specific reference to this distinguished missionary and his labors.

After a thirty-year absence, Adoniram Judson returned to America in 1843 to gain additional support for his various undertakings in Burma. The renewed interest this visit generated may also suggest a date in the 1840s for the collection box, rather than the earlier date of 1835. The name of Frederic Denison (1819–1901) is inscribed on the inside of the box's lid, indicating that he acquired it after he became pastor of the church in 1847, and probably following the death of Judson in 1850. As Denison also served as the historian for the First Baptist Church of Westerly, the collection box would have especially appealed to him as an historic relic of the Baptist Church and its efforts to spread Christianity to remote corners of the world.³

CPM

1. Benes and Zimmerman 1979, pp. 146–47.
2. John K. Kernan, "Charity in Newport," *Antiques*, v. 87 (May 1965), p. 593.
3. In 1867 Denison published his *Historical Sketch of the First Baptist Church, Westerly*, printed by Utter of Westerly.



WORK BOX, ca. 1845
 Simeon Hazard (1817–55)
 Newport, Rhode Island
 Mahogany with mahogany veneer and
 ivory keyhole escutcheon; chestnut, pine,
 cedar. 12¼ x 13¾ x 11
 Gift of Mr. and Mrs. John S. Walton.
 76.198

Publication:
 Monkhouse 1980, p. 132.

The monumental treatment accorded ladies' work boxes in Regency and early Victorian England suggests the high regard in which needlework was held at that time. The RISD Museum owns an English example resembling an Egyptian temple, with its sloping sides and flaring cornice, in which the facade falls forward to reveal drawers behind, while the lid opens up to reveal a mirror set into its underside and a fitted partitioned tray below for pins and needles, spools of thread, scissors and the like. That same monumental scale is expressed in the Newport work box also belonging to RISD. But aside from a similar interior arrangement under the lid (fig. a), the exterior with its ogee-shaped top and freestanding flared columns at the four corners appears to take inspiration from later Classical Revival designs for dining-room furniture, and particularly cellarets and knife boxes. While the latter are extremely rare in American furniture of any date, the pair of knife boxes *en suite* with the Philadelphia Empire sideboard and cellaret (Philadelphia Museum of Art) made for Simon Gratz about 1825 do bear comparison: each has columns flanking the front facade, peaked concave lids, and turned feet (PMA 1976, pp. 265–66).

Even rarer than American-made knife boxes is furniture labeled by the maker of the RISD work box, Simeon Hazard. Despite his impressive label with its Greek key border (fig. b), this box is the only piece of furniture to come to light having any markings from his shop.¹ Yet a full-page advertisement in the first Newport directory from 1856–57 for the successor firm of James L. and George A. Hazard, "manufacturers of rich furniture" at 23 Church Street,² suggests that Simeon Hazard had been in business for some time and enjoyed extensive patronage:

James L. & George A. Hazard beg to inform the public that they have taken the premises and business of the late Simeon Hazard (so long and so well



20



Fig. 20a

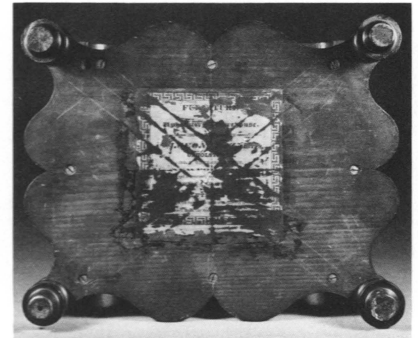


Fig. 20b

known to their fellow citizens for his integrity and as a superior workman), and will continue to furnish highly-finished Cabinet Furniture, Draperies, Hangings, and Embroideries, of the most fashionable styles, and after Parisian models, which they regularly import. Messrs. Hazard have been for twenty years employed by their brother, and are able, in all respects, to carry on the business. Their work can be seen in nearly all the mansions and cottages of Newport, and in every part of the country, and references offered to the ladies and gentlemen of various places who have honored their establishment with orders. (p. 11)

The label on the RISD work box states that Simeon Hazard was then located at 1 Church Street, and as he did not move to 23 Church Street until 1847, a terminal date can be established for the box. Hazard purchased his new premises from the Newport cabinetmaker Adam S. Coe, who had previously maintained a shop at that address (Carpenter 1954, p. 24). Coe alone, or in partnership with Gideon Palmer, had been actively engaged in the cabinet trade in Newport since the very beginning of the 19th century, and is perhaps best known for making a sofa with a serpentine-curved crest rail for Edward W. Lawton in April, 1812, now at Winterthur (Downs 1952,

fig. 276). Simeon Hazard therefore had ties with a firm which had flourished when the Goddards and Townsends still dominated Newport cabinetmaking. Even though the RISD work box was made slightly before the acquisition of the Coe shop, such close links with the past may explain why its four columns bear a striking resemblance to the turned columns found on 18th-century tilt-top tea tables and stands, especially in terms of their flared profiles, here executed on a diminutive scale.
CPM

1. The label reads as follows:
"Furniture/and/Upholstery Ware-
house/Simeon Hazard/Upholsterer/
No. 1 Church Street/Newport, R.I./
Has on hand and is constantly manu-
facturing every article in the/Cabi-
net and Chair line./ Upholstery
Goods/of all kinds, and the business
as usual attended to in all its
branches/Orders thankfully received
and faithfully executed."
2. J.L. and G.A. Hazard maintained the business until they were joined by Jeremiah Horton in 1884, when the firm became Hazard and Horton. About 1874 they provided interior furnishings for the Fairman Rogers' Newport cottage, Fairholme, while it was undergoing alterations by Furness & Hewitt of Philadelphia; some of their furniture still survives in the house (C.W. Elliott, *The Book of American Interiors* [Boston, 1876], pl. 113). For an historical sketch of the firm see: "An Old Newport Business House," *Newport Journal and Weekly News*, February 28, 1903, p. 6.

21

CHEST-ON-STAND, ca. 1700
Probably Boston, Massachusetts
Maple, pine, with painted decoration.
37 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 30 x 18 $\frac{1}{2}$
Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke. 20.629

Provenance:
Arthur Leslie Green, Newport, from
whom purchased by the donor in 1917
for \$250

Publication:
Landman 1975, p. 930.

Condition:
The left front leg has been spliced to the stile above the lower rail. The three other turned legs have been doweled into the stiles below the rail. The cleats on the underside of the lid have been replaced. The chest panels retain their original painted decoration.

22

CHEST-ON-STAND, ca. 1700
Probably Boston, Massachusetts
Maple, pine, with painted decoration.
35 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 32 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 16 $\frac{1}{4}$
Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke. 20.630

Provenance:
Arthur Leslie Green, Newport, from
whom purchased by the donor for \$125

Publications:
Nutting, 1921, Nutting 1928, no. 214;
p. 90; Banks 1932, p. 27.

Condition:
The original back stretcher was moved to the front and the rear stretcher replaced in 1971 by August Mende, Providence. The drawer originally had wooden knobs, replaced by leather thongs. A pine board has been inserted at a later date to divide the interior of the chest in half, and the cleats are replacements. The original painted decoration has been stripped and the case refinished.

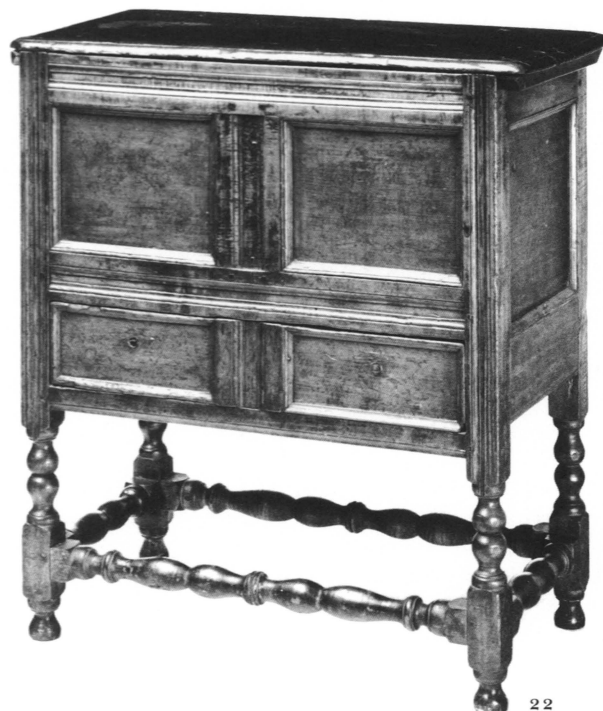
Neither of the Museum's two chests-on-stands is completely intact. One retains its original paint but has a new base; the other retains most of its original base but its paint has been almost completely stripped. Considered together, however, the two provide ample evidence of an unusual furniture form popular among wealthy patrons in eastern Massachusetts at the end of the 17th century.

All of the dozen or so similar examples known of this form have several features in common: four-, six-, or eight-sided

panels on the front of the case, an interior without dividers or compartments, and the drawer paneled to imitate two separate drawers.¹ The Museum's unpainted chest is one of the few American chests with rectangular panels, although English examples are known.² In this country, arched hexagonal panels are more common. A few of the chests stand on ball-turned legs and stretchers, although vase- and ring-turned bases like that on cat. 22 have survived in greater numbers.

The most striking feature of the group is their brilliant red and black painted decoration, portions of which survive on both RISD chests. The front panels of cat. 21 are covered with a crimson ground, on which flowering trees are freely painted in black and white, leaning from the outer edge of either panel towards the center. Similarly painted trees appear on at least four other related chests. Several different hands appear to have been at work, however, for the quality of the painting and the additions of white highlights vary from chest to chest. Both ends and the stiles of cat. 21 are also painted red and "grained" with large swirls of black paint similar to those on one of the best preserved examples (Sack 6, p. 26). This effect was probably intended to simulate expensive red lacquer or tortoiseshell. The bent trees have been compared to floral marquetry, although they, too, have an Oriental appearance that was probably inspired by japanning or red lacquer wares popular at the time.³ The second RISD chest has lost its red stain and any branches that may once have filled its front panels, yet black striations painted on both ends and stiles indicate that there was originally a highly animated painted surface with graining even more exaggerated than the other chest's.

Such ornament is a provincial reflection of the sumptuous furniture popular in the court circles of Restoration England. By association, it conveyed the status of colonial Boston's first families and today suggests the bright colors that were used throughout early household interiors. This new "William and Mary" style, further expressed by the high and delicate base, molded ornament, and generally smooth surface planes, stood in direct contrast to the older decorative techniques of applied bosses and deeply set panels on furniture that emphasized bulk and weight. The construction of the two RISD chests, on the other hand, still indicates the lingering tradition of the joiner's craft, which was gradually supplanted in Boston by the arrival of



London-trained cabinetmakers. The dovetailed drawers, a London technique first introduced to America in Boston, represent a significantly different method of construction from that of other joined furniture whose drawer sides and ends are simply butted and nailed together. In addition to the documentary evidence that identifies two chests from the Hancock and Hubbard families of Boston, the dovetails are strong evidence of Boston workmanship. Other examples of the form were made in the Symonds shops in Salem, and a third group in southeastern Massachusetts.⁴

The precise function of such small chests-on-stands is uncertain. They may be the "chamber tables" or "dressing stands" referred to in probate records.⁵ Unfortunately, the function and appearance of furniture are seldom described in 17th-century household inventories. For example, the "joined chests" and common "chests" that appeared frequently in both downstairs and upstairs rooms of New England houses could refer

to anything ranging from crude boxes to these stylish chests-on-stands. As distinct from dressing boxes with numerous slots and small drawers,⁶ these two chests-on-stands have undivided interiors that offer little evidence of their original purpose beyond the storage of small objects or articles of clothing that might be lost in larger or lower storage containers.

TSM

1. Other examples include: the Hancock family chest at the Brooklyn Museum (Comstock 1962, no. 58); the Hubbard family chest, Bernard and S. Dean Levy, Brochure 4, (1984), p. 4; Henry Ford Museum, (*Antiques*, v. 73 [February 1958], p. 152); Lockwood 1921, fig. 236; Bayou Bend (Warren 1975, no. 27); Winterthur (Forman 1970, fig. 7); Nutting 1928, nos. 215–16; *Antiques*, v. 121 (March 1982) p. 535; Sotheby's sale 4211 (Jan. 31–Feb. 3, 1979), lot 1250; *Antiques*, v. 115 (Jan. 1979), frontisp.

2. Chinnery 1979, p. 374, figs. 3: 417, 3: 419.
3. See Schwartz 1956, p. 344; Forman 1970, fig. 7.
4. The Salem chests appear in Nutting 1928, nos. 210–12. For southeastern Massachusetts examples, see St. George 1979, p. 64; and Fales 1976, p. 350.
5. These terms were proposed by Benno Forman (see Fairbanks and Trent 1982, no. 254), although among the rural inventories compiled by Abbott Cummings, the term does not appear before the mid-18th century.
6. See Little 1980, pp. 62–64.

HIGH CHEST OF DRAWERS, 1710–35
Probably Boston, Massachusetts
Maple; pine. 69 x 39½ x 21¼
Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke. 20.882

Provenance:

Purchased in Boston, 1916, for \$300, by
Arthur Leslie Green, from whom
purchased by the donor

Publication:

Landman 1975, p. 934.

Exhibition:

Pilgrim Tercentenary Exhibition, RISD, 1920

Condition:

Refinished in 1916, and again in 1946 on
the recommendation of John Maxon.
The base molding of the upper case
is new. The brasses were replaced in
1916 and again in 1946. Top edge of
three drawers in upper section repaired
by August Mende, Providence, 1971.
Traces of the original black paint or stain
survive on the mid-molding and rear legs.

High chests supported on a tall frame
with delicate turned legs were radical
departures from the stout joined chests
made by previous generations of crafts-
men. The inspiration for their design
probably derived from Carolean chests-
on-stands, which in turn had been
inspired by elaborate Continental lac-
quer cabinets-on-stands that became
popular in England after the restoration
of the monarchy. Their precariousness
made them all the more conspicuous
both as emblems of colonial prosperity
and of the recent emergence of the
cabinetmaking trade in New England.

Like other chests of drawers, those on
tall stands were used for storing textiles
in an age before closets. On this high
chest, an additional shallow drawer
cleverly concealed in the taurus molding
of the entablature may once have held
documents or other valuables. The flat
top, on the other hand, was ideal for the
conspicuous display of ceramics, glass,
metalwares, and other prized decorative
objects. This practice is well documented
in household inventories of the period
and confirmed by other furniture con-
structed with stepped superstructures.¹

The richness of the materials and
surface treatments of such high chests
frequently corresponded to the new
enthusiasm for the display of precious
objects. The most elaborate New England
high chests were japanned, followed by
those with walnut veneers. This high
chest is made of native tiger maple but
was originally stained or painted a very
dark brown or black, traces of which



remain on the mid molding and rear legs. With its original dark finish intact, the gleaming brass hardware with its etched designs would have played a more salient part in the overall design. The placement of the handles and escutcheons on the drawers accentuates the verticality of the upper case, and culminates in a line of six brasses beneath the heavily molded cornice.

An added sense of baroque movement is achieved by the verticality of the high chest itself. The open framework of the base belies the considerable weight of the upper case. Equally perverse, the gradual flaring of the legs is intentionally interrupted at their tops, so that the case appears to rest on the most insubstantial portion of the leg. An unusual aspect of the legs on this piece is the addition of turned rings midway between the base and top. Though handsomely turned, they diminish the visual tension created by the otherwise delicate flared supports. The energy is regained, however, with the irregular line of the skirt, outlined with a thin, applied strip that resembles a beaded molding. The line of the skirt also corresponds exactly to the horizontal line of the stretchers below.

For Arthur Leslie Green, the quest for this six-legged highboy in 1916 required him to negotiate with two different owners, as often happened with tall case furniture that was divided in half by succeeding generations. One sister owned the lower half and the other sister was using the upper half as an ordinary chest of drawers. Green wrote to Mrs. Radeke in May of 1916 that he was pursuing a "6 legged highboy the secret drawer kind—the best type," but also warned that "Nutting's venture & the pretty general sudden museum interest in this type of furniture has advanced prices." Green eventually acquired both halves from the two unnamed sisters but without the original brasses. In keeping with the restoration philosophy of his time, Green advised, "I should have the piece cleaned and scraped at once, then oiled, then waxed. (Then when the janitor has a little leisure time he could rub it whenever he could.)"²

TSM

1. See Gaines 1957; Fales 1976, p. 184; *Antiques*, v. 128 (December 1985), p. 1050.
2. ALS, Arthur Leslie Green to Mrs. Radeke (June 1916), in RISD Museum archives.



24

DRESSING TABLE, 1740–60
Boston, Massachusetts
Walnut; pine. 30¾ x 34¼ x 21½
Furniture Exchange Fund and Gift of
William W. White. 72.077

Publication:

Landman 1975, p. 924.

Provenance:

Probably descended in the family of Elizabeth Storer (1726–1786) and Isaac Smith (1726–1786). Multiple inscriptions of "E. Cruft" on the sides of the carved drawer suggest that it belonged to their daughter, Elizabeth Smith Cruft (1789–1859) and descended to her son, Samuel Breck Cruft (d. 1899); to his granddaughters, the Misses Eunice (d. 1939) and Frances Cruft (d. 1941); to the latter's cousin, Frank Hinckley of Providence (d. 1958); to his widow, Anita W. Hinckley, from whom purchased by the Museum in 1972.

Condition:

The front left and two rear knee brackets were replaced in 1973 by Robert W. Mende, Providence. The brass knob is missing from the central drawer.

Dressing tables, also known as chamber tables, and in modern times, lowboys, were bedroom furniture in the 18th century. They were normally covered with a cloth (formerly called a "toilet") and contained all the paints, powders, patches, pomades, pins, brushes, and combs that a lady required for getting dressed. A small dressing glass with additional small drawers probably stood on top of it, or else a looking glass would have hung above it on the wall. Elaborately equipped ladies at their dressing tables became an easy target for print-makers, whose satirical prints convey the variety and clutter of toilet accessories lacking from most museum installations.

Wealthy customers often owned a matching high chest of drawers or a chest-on-chest for storing clothes and textiles. Few such pairs have survived, although numerous inventory references to "1 case drawers and table thereto" in upstairs chambers attest to their popularity in mid-18th-century Boston.¹

Dozens of veneered, japanned, walnut, and mahogany dressing tables from Boston incorporate the same general features as this example: one long drawer above three smaller ones, cabriole

legs with "plain," or pad, feet and a shaped skirt with turned pendants. The middle drawer was customarily embellished with a carved or inlaid fan, a carved shell, or else a simple, hollowed arch. The elaborately carved drawer on this example relates it to a large group of Boston chests-on-chests, high chests, and other dressing tables, all of which have a similarly carved drawer in common.²

Ever since the publication in 1952 of a labeled chest-on-chest by Benjamin Frothingham, Jr. of Charlestown having a similarly carved shell, nearly every piece of furniture that has come to light having this type of shell has been attributed to Frothingham with little regard to the rest of the case or its construction.³ The construction of the carcass and of the individual shell drawer is only superficially like the others. As a group, they show considerable variation and must represent the work of several different cabinetmakers. The carved shells may be the work of several different men who worked in the shops of any of the approximately sixteen carvers active in Boston between 1725 and 1760.⁴ Unfortunately, little is known about individual ornamental carvers who worked in Boston. Some probably worked within a cabinet shop; others were independent specialists to whom cabinetmakers turned for a specific job. The fact that the shops of cabinetmakers, carvers, turners and other furniture-related craftsmen all tended to congregate in the same part of town encouraged and facilitated the sort of collaboration seen on this dressing table.⁵

Of the many chests and dressing tables with similarly carved drawers, the carving of two chests-on-chests is so similar to that of the RISD dressing table as to be attributable to the same hand.⁶ Other details of this piece, such as the scrolled knee brackets, the blocked rail below the carved drawer, and the raised pad feet, relate to several other Boston dressing tables and high chests.⁷ The shaping of the side skirt, on the other hand, is more complex than the more typical single arch or straight skirt on other tables.

The name "E Cruft" is inscribed repeatedly on the side of the carved drawer in what appears to be 19th-century penmanship. It is not likely to be the name of Capt. Edward Cruft who died in 1735, about the time that such furniture was first produced in Boston. It may well be the name of Elizabeth Storer Smith, the granddaughter of the prominent merchant Isaac Smith, who

married another Edward Cruft in 1810. A chest-on-chest (MFA) with a similarly carved fan descended collaterally in the family of Ebenezer Storer II, but the differences in the construction of their cases and the carving of their shell drawers indicate that they were probably not made as a pair.

TSM

1. See Lyon 1891, p. 107.
2. There are notes on twenty-five such pieces in the RISD curatorial files.
3. See Mabel Munson Swan, "Major Benjamin Frothingham, Cabinet-maker," *Antiques*, v. 62 (November 1952), pp. 392–95; and Helen Comstock, "Frothingham and the Question of Attributions," *Antiques*, v. 63 (June 1953), pp. 502–05.
4. See Randall 1974, p. 241, n. 20.
5. Jobe 1974, p. 9.
6. *Antiques*, v. 104 (September 1973), inside cover; *ibid.*, v. 111 (April 1977), p. 621.
7. See a plain dressing table at the St. Louis Art Museum, illustrated in *Springer* 1982, p. 1186; and a high chest of drawers sold at Christie's, sale 6074 (January 25, 1986), lot 390.

25

DRESSING TABLE, 1755–90
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Mahogany; yellow-poplar, pine. 31¼ x
35⅞ x 21⅝
Bequest of Charles L. Pendleton. 04.077

Publications:

Lockwood 1904, pl. 95; Nutting 1928, no. 432; Margon 1965, p. 140; Landman 1975, p. 933.

Condition:

Cleaned and refinished in 1946, under the recommendation of John Maxon. The brasses are original. The left knee brackets of the front legs are replacements. Small segments of the applied scrolls on the skirt have been patched on both sides of the central lobe, as has the lower half of the central drop.

This dressing table relates to a group of other Philadelphia dressing tables and high chests all with similarly shaped skirts, similarly carved shells, and rococo brasses in a pierced latticework pattern.¹ The contours of their skirts show sufficient variation to indicate that they were probably not cut from the same template, although designs with a central lobe flanked by reverse curves and opposed spurs must have been popular, judging from the number that survive.² The vine carvings on either side of their shell drawers also vary in the direction of their curl and in their degree of elaboration.



The carving of the shells, on the other hand, shows little variation and may be the work of one shop.

As with many pieces in the Pendleton collection, it is difficult to distinguish between the original work of 18th-century craftsmen and the skillful embellishments added by Providence or Philadelphia cabinetmakers and carvers in the late 19th century. The applied scrollwork along the lower edge of the skirt, for example, appears at first to be "too good to be true" both in terms of rococo design in general and its rarity on contemporary Philadelphia furniture. Minor segments have indeed been replaced, and yet the overall color, style of carving, method of application, and degree of wear are remarkably consistent with the rest of the shell and acanthus carving on the drawer and legs. There are no signs of reshaping or later gluing, as there are on one of Pendleton's other dressing tables that was extensively reworked in the late 19th century.

Unique works will always be suspect among art historians. Comparison with the other related dressing tables and high chests would suggest that the applied scrollwork on the skirt was added at a later date, since on most of the others, the skirt is plain except for a single shell or other carved device in the central lobe. Thus the more typical designs emphasize the contrast between the silhouette of the edge and its plain surface. Nevertheless, the Pendleton dressing table appears to be a genuine exception.

For Pendleton's generation of collectors, many of whom sought as he did only high-style furniture in order to create interiors worthy of a Georgian English gentleman, the more rocaille the scrollwork, the more desirable the piece. In the hands of a skillful carver working in traditional methods with access to woods of high quality, almost any effect was possible. Although many late 19th-century "improvements" appear glaring to modern eyes attuned to Victorian excesses and the sinuous lines of the Art Nouveau style, others probably remain concealed beneath the high gloss of ubiquitous French polish.

TSM

1. See Heckscher 1985, no. 163.
2. See Miller 1950, no. 660; *Antiques*, v. 91 (April 1967), p. 409; *Antiques*, v. 103 (May 1973), p. 893; Parke-Bernet sale 120 (May 20, 1939), lot 208; Sotheby's sale 5429 (January 30–31, February 2, 1986), lot 589; and Campbell 1975, p. 6.



26

26

DRESSING TABLE, 1760–80
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Walnut; pine, yellow-poplar. 30¾ x
36 x 22½
Bequest of Charles L. Pendleton. 04.023

Publication:
Lockwood 1904, pl. 36.

Condition:
Cleaned and refinished in 1946. The top has been replaced. The left knee bracket of the left front leg and right knee bracket of the left rear leg are replacements. Holes in the feet probably from casters. The brasses are old but not original.

Just as bed hangings, window curtains, and upholstery fabrics were often matched in well-appointed rooms, so too might the various furniture forms in the same room be carved to match each other. High chests of drawers and dressing tables are the most obvious examples, although cabinetmakers also made sets of chairs to match case furniture. This dressing table relates to a group of side chairs, dressing tables, and high chests all having skirts similarly carved with a central acanthus leaf or rocaille shell.¹ On this example, simple C-scrolls juxtaposed

along the edge of the otherwise plain skirt provide a pleasing counterpoint to the central drawer decorated with a carved shell and gracefully scrolled vines.

Philadelphia chairs and case furniture with similar scrolls along the edges of their skirts have traditionally been attributed to James Gillingham on the basis of a set of labeled chairs.² The labeled chairs do have a simply beaded front rail but no central acanthus leaf. Other labeled Philadelphia chairs and related case furniture indicate that several cabinetmakers besides Gillingham produced similar designs. For example, a high chest by William Savery (PMA 1976, cat. 75) makes effective use of the same contrast between plain and ornamented surfaces with simple C-scrolls and a beaded edge. A dressing table by Thomas Tufft also has a similarly carved skirt, although no central acanthus, as does a side chair with a disputed label of Benjamin Randolph.³ Furthermore, any of these examples could be the work of an independent carver working outside the shops of the cabinetmakers whose labels they bear.

The number of chairs and case furniture with related carving suggests that sparsely carved furniture appealed to wealthy Philadelphians just as much as

ornately carved examples. The attribution of this dressing table to Gillingham on the basis of related chairs is tempting but unsound in light of similar work by other Philadelphia cabinetmakers. The few surviving matched sets of related furniture (Hornor 1935, figs. 160–62) suggest that this dressing table may once have been owned together with a related high chest and chairs that helped unify the best chamber of a wealthy Philadelphia house.

TSM

1. See Hornor 1935, figs. 160–63, 165; Warren 1975, cat. 118.
2. See *Antiques*, v. 49 (June 1946), p. 359; Hipkiss 1941, no. 88; Downs 1952, no. 41; Hornor 1935, fig. 346.
3. *Antiques*, v. 12 (October 1927), p. 293; Hipkiss 1941, no. 89.



27

DRESSING TABLE, 1755–85

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Mahogany; pine, yellow-poplar. 31¼ x 34¼ x 20

Bequest of Charles L. Pendleton. 04.107

Publications:

Lockwood 1904, p. 373, pl. 41; Salomon-sky 1931, pl. 49; Margon 1965, p. 140; Kirk 1970, p. 134, fig. 137; Landman 1975, p. 925.

Condition:

Cleaned and refinished in 1946. The top is an old board but not original. Upper edges of drawers repaired. Knee brackets replaced on left front leg and side of right front leg. Carving on left and right sides of front skirt probably reworked. Lower portion of right scroll on front skirt replaced. Drawer runners replaced. Sides of case once had handles, and the feet once had casters. The brasses are old but not original.

Although extensively restored in the late 19th century, this dressing table represents a different design from the preceding examples and was one of the most popular designs in mid-18th-century Philadelphia. Dozens of other dressing tables, high chests of drawers, and chairs

made in Philadelphia have similarly large, inverted shells on their front skirts and crest rails (see cat. 111).

As on the preceding dressing table, the restrained design of the serpentine skirt is composed of lightly beaded S-scrolls. The beading stops short of the rounded arches at either side, however, which creates an abrupt transition between the skirt and the knee brackets. Although it is possible that the beading originally continued across to the knee brackets, both treatments appear on related examples.¹ Other variations also occurred within this general design as cabinet-makers occasionally placed greater emphasis on the scrolls along the skirt, or produced less costly alternatives with a plain central drawer or shells instead of carved leaves on the knees.²

As Lockwood pointed out in the 1904 catalogue of Pendleton's collection, this dressing table is almost a companion piece to Pendleton's high chest of drawers (cat. 28), or at least the shell on this table probably appealed to Pendleton for that reason.

TSM

1. According to notes made in 1971, John Kirk believed that the ends of the skirt may have been reshaped.
2. See Sack 4, p. 951; Sotheby's sale 3467 (January 24–27, 1973), lot 977; *Antiques*, v. 93 (March 1968), p. 285; *Antiques*, v. 109 (March 1976), p. 417.

HIGH CHEST OF DRAWERS, 1760–85
Maryland, probably Baltimore
Walnut; yellow-poplar, pine. 89 x 39½ x
22

Bequest of Charles L. Pendleton. 04.118

Provenance:

This is probably the chest that Pendleton purchased for \$90 from Gustav Egolph of Norristown, Pennsylvania

Publications:

Lockwood 1904, pl. 94; Margon 1965, p. 111; Margon 1971, p. 229; Landman 1975, p. 937; Margon 1977, p. 39.

Condition:

The central finial has been replaced.

From the earliest days of collecting American furniture, collectors have prized the Philadelphia high chest of drawers above all other forms as the zenith of 18th-century American cabinetmaking. Charles Pendleton was no exception. He acquired several high chests and dressing tables for his own collection (cats. 25–27) and sold dozens of others in his capacity as an antiques dealer.¹

In their zeal to acquire such trophies, without which no serious collection was complete, early dealers and collectors such as Pendleton made no distinction between furniture made in Maryland and Pennsylvania. Partly as a result, very little is known about Maryland furniture from the first three quarters of the 18th century. Few high chests or dressing tables retain their history of ownership and fewer still their history of manufacture.

Although repeatedly attributed to Thomas Affleck or to John Elliot, giants of Philadelphia cabinetmaking, this high chest of drawers exhibits many features now recognized as characteristic of Maryland cabinetmaking. Unlike comparable Philadelphia high chests, the overall proportions are tall and narrow, especially in the pediment. Maryland cabinetmakers also seem to have preferred to make the three smaller top and bottom drawers of equal width, whereas on Philadelphia chests and dressing tables, the central drawer is usually wider than the outer two. Other details, such as the chamfered and fluted corners of the upper and lower case that end in points or “lamb’s tongues,” relate to documented case pieces made in Baltimore, as does the agitated outline of the skirt.²

Compared to the carving on Philadelphia high chests of the same date, the

ornament on this example is relatively unsophisticated. The ruffles on the base are stiff, and the shells on the top and bottom drawers are shallow, round rather than scalloped, and self-contained. The individual lobes of the shells are more linear than plastic and appear to radiate from a single point at the base. Similar shells occur on several other Maryland high chests and dressing tables, suggesting a regional style of carving that differed from Philadelphia practice, and is perhaps the work of the same carver.³

Direct links between Philadelphia and Annapolis cabinetmakers are difficult to establish, since most of the latter city’s leading cabinetmakers had emigrated from Britain, and so much of the region’s furniture was directly imported from abroad. Baltimore furniture, on the other hand, was closely linked to Philadelphia. Both of Baltimore’s prin-

cipal cabinetmakers had served their apprenticeships to leading cabinetmakers in Philadelphia in the 1760s, which may explain the transmission of Philadelphia furniture styles to the south and would account for the slight differences in their execution.⁴

TSM



1. See Pendleton’s account book in the RISD Museum archives, and F.J. Sheldon, auctioneer, *Catalogue of an Extraordinary Collection of Antique Furniture, the Property of Mr. C.L. Pendleton*, Providence, December 6–7, 1897.
2. See Elder 1968, p. 13, cats. 47–51, 57–59.
3. See Elder 1968, cats. 5, 51, 59.
4. Weidman 1984, p. 46.

CHEST-ON-CHEST, 1770–90

New London County, Connecticut

Cherry, soft maple; Eastern white pine.

86 x 41 x 20½

Bequest of Isabelle Rhodes Peckham in memory of her mother and father, Abby Williams Gooding and Frank Augustus Rhodes. 40.197

Provenance:

Probably Abby Williams Gooding (1805–1849) of New York City and Providence; to her daughter Abby Williams (Gooding) Rhodes (1836–1912), Providence; to her daughter Isabelle Rhodes Peckham (1862–1936), Providence

Publication:

Landman 1975, p. 938.

Exhibition:

Ellis Memorial Antique Show, Horticultural Hall, Boston, 1973

Condition:

The lower portion of all four bracket feet and their glue blocks have been restored.

Cabinetmakers in Colchester and Norwich, Connecticut, produced a number of massive case pieces with idiosyncratic interpretations of architectural ornament and with distinctive carved and punchwork decoration. Heavy moldings and pronounced dentils in the cornice, rosettes with pinwheels, a notch in each side of the bonnet, and finials in the form of a stylized thistle characterize several related chests-on-chests, high chests of drawers, and desks and bookcases attributed to the Colchester area.¹ On the other hand, this particular form of ogee bracket foot with two beaded cusps relates to a second group of case pieces generally attributed to Norwich.²

In the past, the entire group was attributed without justification to Aaron Roberts of New Britain or to Aaron Chapin of East Windsor and Hartford.³ Further research by Houghton Bulkeley led to the identification of Samuel Loomis of Colchester, his master, Benjamin Burnham, as well as other local cabinetmakers who worked in a similar style, which was then adopted by nearby shops in Hartford County.⁴

The general appearance of this chest-on-chest with fluted pilasters and a broken scroll pediment resembles contemporary Massachusetts chests-on-chests. Specific details such as the flame finials and the fan on the top center drawer also relate to Eastern Massachusetts case furniture. Other details,

however, such as the pinwheels below the central plinth and the wave-like cusps on the bracket feet reflect regional preferences for ornament that have few counterparts among urban-made furniture or that made outside of Connecticut. One peculiar detail is the use of ogee bracket feet in the front but straight bracket feet with a different outline at the back. The discrepancy between the front and back profile creates an unusual degree of asymmetry and suggests that the frontal view was foremost in the designer's mind, and that perhaps he was using interchangeable feet from ready-made components.

The stop-fluted pilasters in the upper case of this chest-on-chest reflect the likely influence of Rhode Island furniture, more obvious aspects of which occur on New London County furniture with block-and-shell facades. The normal pattern of stop-fluting is oddly reversed, however. Perhaps an intentional misprision of the classical orders, the plinths are separated from their bases and the cabling fills the upper two-thirds of the

flutes rather than the lower portion. Another unusual decorative technique is the sawtooth border around the drawer tops, central plinth, and beneath the cornice. A second line of chevron carving runs along the inside of the cornice, as if the pediment had been "stitched" together. Although the punchwork is relatively simple, on other related furniture it resembles bright-cut engraving on Neo-classical silver and suggests a later date for these chests than one might assume from their early Georgian appearance.

TSM



1. See Myers and Mayhew 1974, cats. 35–40.
2. *Ibid.*, cats. 55–58.
3. See Francis P. Garvan sale, AAA (January 8–10, 1931), lot 296; Philip Flayderman sale, AAA (January 2–4, 1930), lot 503.
4. Bulkeley 1963; Wadsworth 1985, cat. 100.

BUREAU TABLE, 1760–85

Newport, Rhode Island

Mahogany; pine, yellow-poplar. 34 x 36 x 19½

Gift of Mary LeMoine Potter. 33.216

Provenance:

Descended to the donor from her grandmother, Mary Mawney Potter (1779–1835), the wife of Judge Elisha R. Potter of Kingston, Rhode Island

Publications:

Isham 1927, p. 17, fig. 3; *Bulletin*, RISD, v. 22 (October 1934), p. 59; Swan 1946, p. 292; *Rhode Island History*, v. 24 (1965), p. 38; Ott 1965, no. 73; Ott 1965a, p. 567; Margon 1965, p. 195; Landman 1975, p. 931; Fleming and Honour 1977, p. 337; *Antique Monthly*, v. 14 (January 1981), p. 17; Moses 1984, fig. 1.11; *Museum Handbook*, RISD, 1985, no. 269.

Exhibitions:

Rhode Island Tercentenary Exhibition, RISD, 1936, (p. 17), cat. 8; *John Brown House Loan Exhibition*, Rhode Island Historical Society, 1965, cat. 73.

This is one of three known Newport bureau tables whose top drawers are hinged at the front and whose interiors are fitted as writing desks with blocked drawers and pigeonholes.¹ The top drawer of a fourth bureau table made for John Brown is equipped with a collapsible writing leaf and small compartments, although its drawer front does not fall forward.² A fifth bureau table made for the Newport merchant George Gibbs has a similar folding surface for writing that may be a later addition.³ Because the writing drawer slides forward and the drawer front folds flat, the resulting surface extends well beyond the blocked base and permits more leg room for a person seated in a chair than do the related conventional bureau tables.

The outward resemblance of these desks to dressing tables suggests that they stood upstairs in a bedroom and were intended for more private, personal use than a business-oriented desk and bookcase that stood downstairs or in a counting-house. Additional evidence of their more intimate use is the low writing surface that must have necessitated a low chair or stool, typical bedroom seating furniture. In addition, the few drawers and partitions of this kneehole desk could not accommodate the account books, ledgers, notes and letters of an active merchant. Several of the original owners of kneehole desks, including



30



Fig. 30a

John Brown, or in this case, Judge Elisha Potter, also owned a desk and bookcase.

It is not known which individual member of the Townsend or Goddard family made this desk, although it is generally accepted as by that group of closely interrelated Newport craftsmen. According to the donor, in whose family the desk descended, there once existed a bill for it from John Goddard. William Davis Miller, on the other hand, had no recollection of such a document among the Potter family papers, nor has one turned up since. Furthermore, neither the internal evidence of the case construction nor the carving of the shells relate to the documented case furniture by John

Goddard.

Of the other bureau tables with desk interiors, one is signed by Edmund Townsend and another attributed to him on the basis of its similarity.⁴ This desk bears only a superficial resemblance to those two. Its case is constructed in a completely different manner, and the underside of the top slides onto projections of the sides in the manner of Boston case furniture. The drawers are also made in the Boston manner, with the bottoms nailed across the sides and back and set flush within a rabbet on the drawer front. Unlike the drawers on most other bureau tables, these appear never to have had any applied runners.

The shell on the recessed door is perhaps unique among bureau tables for lacking a central rosette at the base of the lobes. Similar shells are found on interior desk drawers but not on the blocked facades of the other three- and four-shell bureau tables. Visually, however, its design is more effective than the conventional shells at catching what little light reaches its concave lobes.

Recent suggestions that the Potter desk may have been made in Boston seem highly unlikely, although aspects of its construction relate to Boston workmanship. Besides John Goddard and John and Edmund Townsend, at least ten other members of these two families were active as cabinetmakers in the mid-18th century. Daniel Goddard, for example, employed a similar technique for attaching the top to the sides of his only known signed piece.⁵ His brother, Townsend Goddard, has also been proposed as a likely maker of the Potter family furniture, since he is known to have been working in Kingston in 1777, although no bureau tables by him are known.⁶

Until we can account for the considerable variation between even the signed and labeled (Hipkiss 1941, no. 38) bureau tables by Edmund Townsend, this desk will remain something of a maverick, confidently attributed to the shop tradition of the Goddards and Townsends but not to a particular cabinetmaker, and perhaps an early work that reflects the lingering influence of Boston methods of blockfront cabinetwork on Newport craftsmen.

TSM

1. The others are illustrated in Moses 1984, p. 287; Sack 3, pp. 792–93. A three drawer chest with the top drawer designed as a fall-front desk is at Winterthur (Downs 1952, no. 219).
2. Christie's sale 5153 (June 12, 1982), lot 198.
3. Sotheby's sale 5001 (January 27–29, 1983), lot 433.
4. See Moses 1984, pp. 251–52, 287.
5. See Moses 1984, pp. 271, 293–94. The influence of Boston cabinetmaking upon Newport craftsmen is discussed in Lovell 1974, pp. 118–21, and in R. Peter Mooz, "The Origins of Newport Block-Front Furniture Design," *Antiques*, v. 99 (June 1971), p. 883.
6. Swan 1946, p. 293.



31

BUREAU TABLE, 1765–85

Attributed to Edmund Townsend (1736–1811)

Newport, Rhode Island

Mahogany; chestnut, yellow-poplar. 33¾ x 36½ x 19½

Bequest of Charles L. Pendleton. 04.051

Publications:

Lockwood 1904, p. 229, pl. 228; Lockwood 1921, fig. 121; *Bulletin*, RISD, v. 22 (October 1934), p. 60; Carpenter 1954, no. 40; Landman 1975, p. 931; Moses 1984, fig. 7.13.

Exhibition:

Hunter House Loan Exhibition, Preservation Society of Newport County, 1953.

Condition:

Cleaned on recommendation of John Maxon, 1946. Several glue blocks behind the feet have been replaced. Base of left rear foot missing. Patches to the front right corner of top. The brasses have been replaced.

Of the fifty or so block-front kneehole bureau tables known to exist, only four are signed or labeled by their makers. Two are marked by Edmund Townsend, one with a label in the Karolik collection and the other, made for a John Deshon of New London, Connecticut, is inscribed on a drawer (Hipkiss 1941, no. 38; Sack 3, pp. 792–93). The case construction and carved shells on this unsigned bureau table are so similar to these two documented examples by Edmund Townsend as to be reasonably attributable to him. In particular, the manner in which the top is secured by lateral braces let into both sides of the case at front and back and rabbeted to receive the back board, and the eleven-lobed shell in relatively low relief, are features believed to be distinctive of Edmund's work.¹

Comparison with the signed and labeled works reveals that this dressing table combines aspects of both. Like the Deshon desk, its recessed door has an arched panel instead of the more costly blocking and carved shell. As a result, the

base molding below the door does not repeat the line of the blocking above. Both also have similarly carved shells without stop fluting within the rosette at the base. These same features relate to two other desks also attributed to Edmund Townsend that are remarkably similar to this one (Moses 1984, figs. 7.12 and 7.14).

On the other hand, the design of the ogee bracket feet on this bureau table has more in common with the Townsend piece in the Karolik collection. Both have knee brackets that join in the middle without a space. The delicately carved volutes on the blocked portion of the front feet are also alike, whereas the volutes on the Deshon desk are thicker and the scroll at the end less well defined. Apart from the desk interior (see cat. 30), another unusual detail of the Deshon desk is the continuation of the beaded edge of the upper drawer divider across the top of the recessed area. On the labeled bureau table and others attributed to Edmund Townsend, beading defines only the edges of the drawers and stops short of the central portion. It may be that the Deshon desk is an early work by Townsend, made at the end of his apprenticeship (presumably around 1757) or shortly after Deshon's marriage in 1752. In his other bureau tables, including this one, Townsend seems to have refined any awkward aspects of its design.

There is unfortunately no evidence of the ownership or use of this piece before Pendleton acquired it. The undivided top drawer is equally well suited for holding writing accessories or the various small items required for getting dressed and made up. The latter functions probably would have excluded the former, since a dressing table was normally equipped with a dressing glass on top, and the blocked knee-hole form was already difficult to draw close to in a chair for writing.

TSM

1. Moses 1984, pp. 268–69.

32

CHEST-ON-CHEST, 1765–95

Attributed to John Townsend (1732/3–1809)

Newport, Rhode Island

Mahogany; chestnut, yellow-poplar.

86 x 45 x 24½

Bequest of Commander William Davis Miller. 59.251

Provenance:

Probably Elisha Reynolds Potter (1764–1835), Kingston, Rhode Island; to his son, Elisha Reynolds Potter, Jr. (1811–1883); to his brother, William H. Potter (1816–1908); to his niece, Mary Lemoine Potter (1860–1938); to her cousin, Commander William Davis Miller, by 1936

Publications:

"Kingston Mansion is Treasure Trove," *Providence Sunday Journal*, July 7, 1935, p. 9; *Museum Notes*, RISD, 1980, p. 14; Monkhouse 1980, p. 126; Moses 1984, pp. 144, 166–67.

Exhibition:

Tercentenary Exhibition, Peace Dale, Rhode Island, 1936.

In addition to the desk and bookcase (cats. 39, 40) and the knee-hole bureau table (cats. 30, 31), another major form of Newport case furniture to incorporate a block-and-shell front is the chest-on-chest. A reference to such a piece appears in a letter from the often-quoted correspondence between John Goddard and Moses Brown, dated June 30, 1763:

I Recd. a few lines from Jabez Bowen whom I suppose this furniture is for, Requesting me to make a pre. Case of Drawers. please to inform him I shall gladly serve him if he can wate till some time in the fall which will be as soon as I can finnish them as I have but little help if he inclines to wate for me I would know whither he means to have them different from what is common, as there is a sort which is called a Chest on Chest of Drawers & Sweld. front which are Costly as well as ornimental. thou'l Please to le me know friend Bowens minde that I may Conduct accordingly. till then am thy friend¹

As "sweld" in the 18th century is used to describe anything not straight, in the context of a Newport chest-on-chest it undoubtedly refers to a block front. Although the fate of that particular chest-on-chest is not known, Moses Brown did buy one for himself (Ott

1975, p. 942), but opted for a straight front similar to RISD's, no doubt feeling he could make do with one which was not "Costly as well as ornimental." Based on the survival rate for block-and-shell chests-on-chests, Moses Brown was not alone in preferring the simpler variant, because only five are known, making it by far the rarest form of block-and-shell case furniture to come out of Newport, with the exception of the wardrobe, of which there is one known example at Chipstone (Rodriguez Roque 1984, pp. 2–3).² But Moses Brown was unusual by comparison to his more flamboyant brothers – Nicholas, Joseph, and John – each of whom not only owned a block-and-shell desk and bookcase, as did he, but also a block-and-shell chest-on-chest.³

Although Moses Brown may have had more modest tastes than his three brothers, the straight-front chest-on-chest that he purchased was still among the most costly of its type, along with the example at RISD. Had he been truly modest, his chest-on-chest would have had plain front corners, and a single vase-and-corkscrew finial in its pediment, of which there are examples at the Metropolitan Museum (Heckscher 1985, pp. 224–25) and Yale. Moses Brown's chest-on-chest, RISD's, and six others known to the writer have fluted quarter columns in both the lower and upper cases, and three vase-and-corkscrew finials in the pediment.⁴ Regardless of cost, Newport straight-front chests-on-chests are remarkably homogeneous, and almost invariably incorporate ogee bracket feet, thumbnail-molded drawers, an opening in the top of the lower case (Jobe and Kaye 1984, pp. 174–75), a waist molding attached to the upper case, wooden spring locks in the top pair of drawers, and an enclosed pediment with conforming raised panels in the tympanum.

On both stylistic and structural grounds Moses Brown's chest-on-chest is particularly close to the one at RISD, and in turn they both bear a strong resemblance to the Audley Clarke family chest-on-chest at the Newport Historical Society (Moses 1984, pp. 168–69), and the example in the collection of Robert Goelet (Ott 1965, pp. 82–83). The only minor difference between Moses Brown's and the others is that the quarter columns on his are fluted, while theirs are stop-fluted. One particularly pleasing refinement which they all share is a quarter-round molding attached to the skirt, thus uniting the round contours of the ogee bracket feet at each end. With regard to brass handles, RISD's is unusual



in having bale handles without escutcheon plates, while all other Newport straight-front chests-on-chests, and not just the immediate group, have the escutcheon plates so often associated with the Chippendale style. This simpler treatment suggests a later date for the RISD chest.

With the possible exception of the Robert Goelet chest-on-chest,⁵ the other three are known to "contain the unique John Townsend calligraphy on some drawer backs and bottoms and are thus authenticated to him" (Moses 1984, p. 144). In making this connection, Michael Moses used the "A" and "B" found inscribed in pencil in the top pair of drawers of the RISD chest-on-chest as part of his evidence. Unfortunately, there is no signed or labeled chest-on-chest by John Townsend known to further verify Moses's valuable observation. The only labeled Newport chest-on-chest which has thus far come to light is by Thomas Townsend and probably made for David Gardiner of Long Island (Failey 1976, p. 162). According to Michael Moses, its construction, especially of the drawers, varies considerably from the other examples, and hence cannot be used to throw further light on them (Moses 1984, p. 270).

CPM

1. Norman Isham, "John Goddard and His Work," *Bulletin, RISD*, v. 15 (April 1927), pp. 14–15.
2. The other wardrobe which is thought to be from Rhode Island has arched doors with beveled panels, rather than block-and-shells (*Antiques*, v. 92 [October 1967], p. 544).
3. John Brown's chest-on-chest is in a private collection (Ott 1965, pp. 84–85); Nicholas Brown's may actually have been made for his son of the same name and is at the Cleveland Museum of Art (Henry Hawley, "A Townsend-Goddard Chest-on-Chest," *The Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art*, v. 65 [October 1977], pp. 276–83); Joseph Brown's may have been made for his daughter, Eliza Ward, and is at Winterthur (Downs 1952, pl. 183).
4. Notes on these six examples are in the Index of Rhode Island Design, RISD Museum.
5. Michael Moses apparently did not have an opportunity to examine the Goelet chest-on-chest.

CHAMBER TABLE, 1800–10
 Portsmouth, New Hampshire
 Mahogany with mahogany, rosewood
 and light wood veneers; pine. 29¾ x
 35¾ x 19¼
 Furniture Exchange Fund. 68.168

Provenance:
 Israel Sack, Inc., New York City

Publications:
Museum Notes, RISD, v. 55 (December
 1968), pp. 17, 19; Sack 2, p. 498; Kirk
 1970, p. 74; *Antiques*, v. 97 (March 1970),
 p. 418.

Although this form of chamber table is frequently encountered in England, where today it is often referred to as a serving table, it is rarely seen in American furniture (Kirk 1970, pp. 74–75). There are, however, six closely related examples which have in common elliptical fronts, a central arch, tapered legs which become more pointed below the inlaid cuffs, figured veneers on the drawer fronts which are outlined with cross-banding, and, with one exception, bellflower inlay at the top of the front legs. Within this basic formula the most notable difference is in the number and placement of the drawers, with RISD's table the simplest of the group. It has two square drawers flanking a long drawer (divided into six small compartments and one large one) over the arch. The example at Winterthur alters the arrangement by extending the long drawer the full length of the top, but at the expense of the flanking drawers, which lose some of their height in the process (Montgomery 1966, p. 353). The other four, including one at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (Stoneman 1959, p. 280), two owned by the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities (Sander 1982, p. 57), and the sixth in a private collection, are virtually identical, except in their use of inlay. Their bottom three drawers are organized along the same line as RISD's table, but there is an additional long drawer which extends the full length of the top. Also, they all have figured birch veneers on their drawer fronts, while those belonging to RISD and Winterthur employ less contrast with figured mahogany veneers.

When the first of these chamber tables was published by Stoneman in 1959, it was ascribed to the Seymours of Boston. Since then the two owned by the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities and the one in a private collection have all come to light with



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firm Portsmouth histories in the Lord, Rundlet, and Boardman families. As the latter family was headed by Langley Boardman, a well-known cabinetmaker in Federal period Portsmouth, more research could well link some of this group to his shop.

The rarity of these tables might be explained by the fact that most people preferred much less expensive chamber tables which were made out of pine with either rectangular or half-round tops, and then curtained. An example of this arrangement can be seen in the *Portrait of a Lady of the Cuyler Family*, ca. 1790, now in the Albany Institute of History and Art (Garrett 1983, p. 625). Eliza Leslie has left an excellent description of these curtained chamber tables just as they were disappearing from view in 1840: "Dressing tables of plain, unpainted wood, with white covers, and valances of muslin made full and deep, and descending to the floor, are not yet quite out of use." She also noted that the top of a chamber table such as RISD's would also have been covered: "Unless the top of the bureau is of marble, it is usual to cover it with a white cloth, either of damask linen, or of dimity fringed."¹

CPM

1. Eliza Leslie, *The House Book or, A Manual of Domestic Economy* (Philadelphia, 1849), pp. 299–300.

TALL CLOCK, 1785–1810

Newport, Rhode Island

Movement by Caleb Wheaton

(1757–1827)

Providence, Rhode Island

Mahogany; pine, chestnut. Eight-day

brass movement with engraved and

silver-plated brass dial. 96¾ x 21 x 11

Bequest of Mrs. Allen Aldrich in memory of Allen Aldrich. 25.135

Provenance:

Esek Aldrich (1753–1830) of

Providence; to his son, Esek Aldrich, Jr.

(1798–1869) of Providence; to his son,

Allen Aldrich (1845–1914) of Providence;

to his widow, Mary Dyer Ladd

Aldrich of Providence, by whom be-

queathed to the Museum

Publications:

Bulletin, RISD, v. 24 (January 1936), pp.

3–6; Carpenter 1954, no. 32; Landman

1975, p. 930; Thomas F. Aldrich, *The*

Aldrich Heritage. 350 Years of the Aldrich

Family in America (Providence, 1983), p.

36; Distin and Bishop 1983, no. 50.

Exhibition:

Hunter House Loan Exhibition, Preservation Society of Newport County, 1953.

Condition:

The case was repaired and refinished in 1983 by Robert Walker, MFA, after fallen weights had damaged the front panel and bottom of the base. New bracket feet were added, the corners of the waist molding replaced, and the molding repaired. The fluted columns were cleaned and reglued, and the tips of the carved shell repaired.

Both the dial and the case of this eight-day clock are masterworks by different craftsmen working miles apart in Providence and Newport. The silver-plated brass dial is signed by Caleb Wheaton, a Providence clockmaker and engraver, and is one of the most elaborately engraved examples known by him (fig. a). At the center of the arched top, inscribed within a circle with a chevron border, "Caleb Wheaton/Providence" is underlined with a flourish. An elaborately engraved bird in profile fills the rest of the circle above his name. To one side of the arch is an hourglass and a scythe, the attributes of Chronos, whose profile appears at the other side of the arch. Around the edge, in the manner of a tombstone, an epitaph warns: "Ab hoc momento pendet aeternitas." A pun occurs with the Latin word "momento," which can be translated to mean either



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a moment in time or else a physical motion. Thus the epitaph can be interpreted in the Calvinistic sense of "Eternity depends upon this moment," or else in the purely mechanical sense of "Eternity depends upon the motion of this clock."

The inventory of Wheaton's estate indicates that he owned a sizable library, among which was "1 vol. Elements of Clock and Watch Work" and several volumes of Quaker literature.¹ Listed as both clock- and watchmaker, his shop was at 83 North Main Street, and he is best known for having made the clock in the First Baptist Meeting House. According to his son, "he was very handy with a file."² Nevertheless, a 1798 advertisement that he had "lately received from London... a valuable assortment of the best watches" suggests that like most American clockmakers, many of the watches he sold were imported. The same advertisement, however, states that he "makes and sells clocks, which he warrants."³

Few American clock cases can be attributed with certainty to specific cabinetmakers, although several labeled or well-documented Rhode Island clock cases are known by John Townsend, Holmes Weaver, Benjamin Baker, and Luther Metcalf of nearby Medway, Massachusetts.⁴ Clocks by Caleb Wheaton housed in block-and-shell cases are often attributed to the shop of John Goddard of Newport on the strength of a 1786 receipt from Wheaton to Townsend Goddard, John Goddard's son and executor, for two clock cases. The receipt accompanies a tall clock whose case is remarkably similar to this one (*Antiques*, v. 24 [July

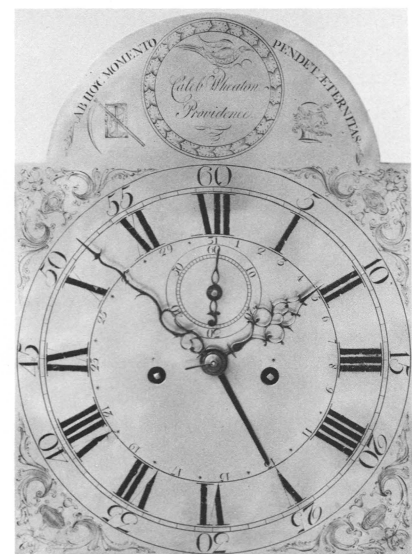


Fig. 34a

1933], p. 3). Both the documented Goddard clock case and this unsigned variant relate to a small group of Rhode Island clocks, including three others with dials inscribed by Wheaton, another by Edward Spalding, and at least ten with unsigned movements in similar mahogany cases with a blocked door surmounted by a carved shell.⁵

The most striking aspect of this group, however, is the architectural nature of their pediments. The hood on this clock is built up with a box that passes below the open portion between the rosettes and extends at either side of the broken-scroll pediment to form plinth blocks. The blocks recall not only the related pediments of the unique nine-shell desk and bookcase made for Joseph Brown (RHS) and the nine-shell chest-on-chest for his daughter Eliza Ward at Winterthur, but also the gable of Joseph Brown's own house at 50 South Main Street in Providence, derived from a plate in William Salmon's *Palladio Londinensis* (1767) (Jordy and Monkhouse 1982, pp. 6–7). The finials are left uncarved at the back, a shortcut that frequently occurs on the finials of furniture made by the Townsends and Goddards.

The cases that contain other clocks by Caleb Wheaton range in style from an early Georgian “pagoda-top” to simple arched dome tops, broken-scroll pediments, and Neo-classical Roxbury-style veneered cases with delicate French bracket feet.⁶ Such variety attests to Wheaton's long career as well as to the possibility that he enlisted the help of several cabinetmakers in different regions, depending on where the clock was to be delivered. It is equally possible that his customers purchased just the clock movement and later bought their own cases from a local cabinetmaker. Apart from the labeled case by John Townsend and the one documented to the estate of John Goddard, no other block-and-shell clock cases can be more firmly attributed than to the general shop tradition of the Goddards and Townsends.

In addition to its significance as the work of two eminent craftsmen, this clock serves as a graphic reminder of a catastrophic event in the early days of Providence. Esek Aldrich, its original owner, was the proprietor of the Washington Tavern and Hotel on Weybosset Street, next to the Custom House. This tall clock evidently stood in the back room of the ell. In 1815, a devastating hurricane struck Providence. The waters rose to twelve feet above the spring tide mark and completely flooded the commercial district of the city where the Hotel Washington stood.⁷ A waterline

about five feet high remains on the backboard of this clock and probably accounts for the loss of the original bracket feet and the deterioration of several glued moldings.

TSM

1. Providence Probate, Will Book 2, pp. 530–31. For biographical information about Wheaton, see James W. Gibbs, “Horologic Rhode Island Visited,” *Bulletin of the National Association of Watch and Clock Collectors* (NAWCC), no. 149 (December 1970), p. 805.
2. *Jewelers' Circular and Horological Review*, v. 21 (May 1890), p. 64.
3. *Bulletin of the NAWCC*, no. 187 (April 1977), p. 139. One of the few watches signed by Wheaton and presumed to have been made by him is discussed in *Bulletin of the NAWCC*, no. 95 (December 1961), p. 58.
4. For the case by John Townsend, see Heckscher 1985, cat. 192. The case by Holmes Weaver was formerly in the Duncan Hazard collection, Parke-Bernet sale 226 (November 9, 1940), lot 117. A clock dated 1770 by Thomas Claggett at Old Sturbridge Village is in a case labeled by Benjamin Baker. The Luther Metcalf case containing a clock by Caleb Wheaton was sold at Sotheby Parke Bernet, sale 4338, part 2 (January 31–February 2, 1980), lot 1625.
5. The other Caleb Wheaton clocks in related cases are: one formerly in the Reginald Lewis collection, Parke Bernet sale 2026 (March 24–25, 1961), lot 265; Old Sturbridge Village; and Sack 7, p. 2017. The Spalding clock is illustrated in Sack 7, p. 1702. Notes on the other ten or so related cases are in the Index of Rhode Island Design, RISD Museum.
6. See Sack 2, p. 454; *Antiques*, v. 100 (September 1971), p. 311; *Antiques*, v. 55 (April 1949), p. 255; Skinner's sale 852 (October 28, 1982), lot 141.
7. A full account of Esek Aldrich, the Washington Hotel, and the Great Hurricane of 1815 appears in Thomas F. Aldrich, *The Aldrich Heritage. 350 Years of the Aldrich Family in America* (Providence, 1983), pp. 28–36.

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TALL CLOCK, 1816

William Stanton (1794–1878)

Providence, Rhode Island

Mahogany with mahogany veneer; pine.

Eight-day brass movement with painted dial. 95 x 21¾ x 10⅝

Gift of Miss Ida Ballou Littlefield. 84.149

Provenance:

Descended in the Dyer family of North Kingstown and Providence; Robert Mower (Hobby Horse Antiques), Marion, Massachusetts, from whom purchased

Publication:

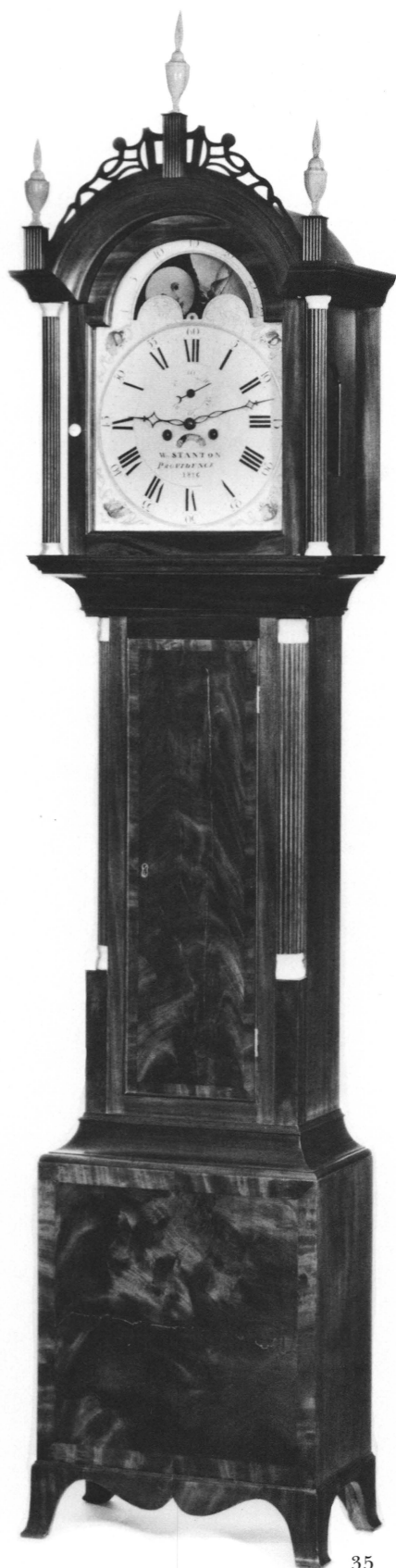
Museum Notes, RISD, 1985, p. 24.

Condition:

The names of several previous owners, clockmakers, and their repairs from 1847 onward are inscribed on the inside of the door. The movement was most recently repaired by George Steiner, Warwick. The case was conserved in 1985 by a grant from the Institute for Museum Services, at the SPNEA Conservation Center, Waltham, Massachusetts, under the supervision of Robert Mussey. The bracket feet and glue blocks were repaired, as were the veneer and banding on the front of the base and waist sections. The fretwork on the hood was reassembled, patched, and refinished. The mahogany facing around the dial was missing and has been replaced.

Before the introduction of interchangeable clock parts and the mass production of inexpensive timepieces in the first quarter of the 19th century, a tall-case clock was the most costly and prominent piece of furniture a person could own. In one sense, a clock's accuracy as a timekeeper was less important than its capacity as a status-bearing object. Nevertheless, its ability to track the seconds, minutes, hours, days, and phases of the moon appealed to enlightened patrons in the Age of Reason. In addition to their horological value, clocks served as reminders of the well-ordered universe that lay beyond the front rooms of the well-to-do houses where they often presided.

The dial of this clock, inscribed “William Stanton / Providence / 1816,” provides more information about itself than does most other furniture in the collection. Unlike the silvered brass dial on the preceding clock that was probably designed and engraved by Caleb Wheaton himself, the painted iron dial on this clock was imported ready-made from Birmingham, England, to be inscribed by Stanton as he saw fit. Ironically, the details of Stanton's life and work are difficult to



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sort out from those of his clockmaking father and namesake, William Stanton (1772–1850).

In 1796, the elder Stanton entered into a two-year partnership with Nehemiah Dodge, a Providence silversmith and jeweler, and occupied the shop opposite the Market House that had formerly belonged to the clockmaker Seril Dodge.¹ It may be the same William Stanton who was referred to as a blacksmith in an 1802 Providence deed, although in 1801, after the dissolution of his partnership with Dodge in 1798, he had moved to Hudson, New York, where he advertised for journeymen and continued in the business of a clock- and watchmaker, silversmith and jeweler until 1804 “at the sign of the clock in motion.”² A William Stanton was residing in Newport in 1810, according to the Federal census of that year. By 1811, he was back in Providence, declared himself bankrupt, and evidently moved to Rochester, New York.³

The younger Stanton, who was referred to in an 1814 Providence newspaper advertisement as a clock- and watchmaker, silversmith and jeweler, was living in Warren in 1822 when he married. Curiously, a William P. Stanton, silversmith and jeweler, was advertising in the *Nantucket Inquirer* in 1821. The younger Stanton next appears in Rochester, where he evidently joined his father. He was working there by 1826 in partnership with his brother Henry (1803–1872) and continued working in Rochester until his death in 1878.

Further confusing the evidence of the Stantons in Providence is the ubiquitous

presence of other contemporary clockmakers named Stanton in Connecticut and Massachusetts. Job in Newport, ca. 1810, Elijah in New Bedford, and a large and prominent Stanton family of silversmiths and cabinetmakers in Stonington, Connecticut, indicate the existence of at least two Stanton families of clock-related craftsmen whose relationship has yet to be established.⁴

The design of this clock case attests to the impact of the so-called Roxbury style popularized by Aaron and Simon Willard in Boston at the end of the 18th century and perpetuated by their apprentices throughout New England during the first half of the 19th century. By 1816, the design of this clock case with engaged quarter columns in the waist section, a hood with free-standing columns, pierced fretwork, and three finials on plinths, would have been familiar to most New Englanders from Maine to Connecticut. The delicate “French” bracket feet and subdued mahogany cross-banding and veneer relate to fashionable furniture in the Neo-classical taste and indicate an effort by the cabinetmaker to update a traditional form.

One extraordinary feature of this case is the substitution of ivory for the usual brass hardware and finials. Even more than polished brass, the ivory sets off the architectural highlights and recalls contemporary furniture attributed to Joseph Rawson (cat. 14) and the role of Thomas Howard in the local ivory trade. As early as 1793, the ivory turner Isaac Greenwood, formerly of Boston, advertised in the *Providence Gazette* that he was

Hon. Elisha Dyer	Q	150	1 B. French alarm clock	No. 11 Greene St.	January 17	1870
Luke Dwyer	Q	100	1 Brass	No. 16 William St.	Feb 10	70
Luke Dwyer	Q	50	7 B. oiling & warranted	No. 16 William St.	Feb 10	70
Jane Mc. Dermott	Q	125	1 B. Alarm	No. 110 Borden St.	March 3	70
Hon. Elisha Dyer	Q	1500	7 B. Musical chime clock	Danielsonville Conn.	May 12	70
Wm. H. Dyer	Q	375	7 Brass	Granston Road.	July 6	70
James Douglass	Q	87	1 B. Spring	main sp. Broken South St.	Oct 14	70
Wm. Delnah	Q	50	1 B. oiling & new cords	Head of Pine St.	Oct 14	70
Thomas Doyle	Q	125	1 B. East Providence		Oct 19	70
Peter Duffy	Q	50	7 B. oiling	Cor. Eddy & Elm Sts.	Nov 1	70
James Dingwell	Q	100	1 W. Lockwood St		Dec 1	70
Michael Desmond	Q	==	1 B. Marine Lever, scalled	No. 32 South Main Street	Dec 3	70
Patrick Devine	Q	100	1 Brass main sp. Broken	Fenners Avenue	Dec 6	70
Margaret A. Donnell	Q	50	1 B. oiling & new cords	No. 120 Plane St.	Dec 19	70
Peter Duffy	Q	50	1 B. Cor. Elm & Eddy Streets		Dec 24	70

Fig. 35a
Detail of page from ledger of Thomas G. Daggett & Son. (Courtesy of Swansea Historical Society)

returning to Providence after an apparently unsuccessful venture in Newport. Among his skills, he listed turning silver, brass, iron, ivory, bone, horn, and wood, adding modestly that “the Height of his Ambition shall be to merit by good Works (not Words) the Patronage of all Mankind.” Soon after this clock case was made, an auction notice described a cargo of African ivory to be sold at the store of Messrs. C. and J. Mauran on South Main Street. Among the pieces to be sold were “556 prime Teeth Ivory, 1998 Scrivella Teeth Ivory, and 93 Sea Horse Teeth.”⁵

Almost fifty years later, in 1857, and for several decades after that, according to inscriptions on the door, this clock was repaired by Thomas Daggett and Son, clock- and watchmakers at 74 Point Street in Providence. Thomas Daggett (fl. 1830–1871) was a deaf and mute clock-maker who worked in both Providence and nearby Swansea, Massachusetts, and kept a remarkable account book containing illustrations after each customer’s name of the clocks he repaired.⁶ A drawing of this clock appears by the name of its owner, William H. Dyer of Providence (fig. a), although the other accounts suggest that by 1870, tall clocks like this one had been largely supplanted by inexpensive and mass-produced spring-driven shelf clocks.

TSM

1. *Providence Gazette* (June 4, 1796). This notice was kindly brought to the author’s attention by Sara Steiner.
2. See *Providence Land Book* 28, vol. 2, pp. 346–47; [Hudson, NY] *Balance and Columbia Repository*, (May 21, 1801 and September 7, 1802).
3. See *Columbian Phenix: or Providence Patriot* (January 19, 1811); Flynt and Fales 1968, p. 329.
4. See *The Jewelers’ Circular and Horological Review* (1883), p. 70; Hall 1978, p. 25; and Meyers and Mayhew 1974, p. 126.
5. *Providence Gazette* (January 5, 1793); [Providence] *Independent Inquirer* (March 16, 1826). A tall clock (1775–88) from Norwich, Connecticut, with works by Thomas Harland and case by Abishai Woodward, also incorporates ivory mounts (Cooper 1980, pl. 41).
6. The account book is in the collection of the Swansea Historical Society. It was kindly brought to the author’s attention by Sara Steiner, who also helped arrange for the accompanying photograph.

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DESK, 1710–40

New England, possibly southeastern Massachusetts

Maple; yellow-poplar, pine. 40½ x 35½ x 20½

Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke. 20.631

Provenance:

Wallace Nutting; Arthur Leslie Green, from whom purchased by the donor in 1916 for \$165

Publication:

Walter A. Dyer, “The American Scrutoire-Desk: Primitive-Queen Anne,” *The Fine Arts*, v. 18 (April 1932), p. 31; Landman 1975, p. 929.

Exhibition:

Pilgrim Tercentenary Exhibition, RISD, 1920.

Condition:

Restored by August Mende, May 1971. Interior lacks two drawers in center section. Interior cleaned of green paint to reveal original red stain. Half-round moldings missing on front. Bottom edge of base molding restored. Brasses are old but not original, and lower right pull replaced. Scalloped arch missing from top of interior.

The earliest desks referred to in New England were simple boxes that often had slanted tops and contained writing utensils, paper, books, and other small articles. These were eventually succeeded by boxes that stood on detachable frames. Although their design combined the advantages of portability and stability, desks-on-frames did not afford adequate space for general storage purposes. Writing desks with a hinged lid and a case of graduated drawers below provided not only greater security, since they could be locked, but also much more room for storage of textiles, as well as other large and small objects, as indicated by inventories.¹

Like the contemporary high chest of drawers (cat. 23), this desk is made of tiger maple and was originally stained, in this instance red. More expensive versions of the same form made in Boston were veneered with walnut burl. Despite crude workmanship, the interior displays a sensitivity to design in its combination of S-curves and reverse curves and the correspondence between the slope of the desk and the shaped boards that divide the graduated drawers from the central compartment. The sliding document drawers and a concealed well below the surface of the writing compartment are early efforts to provide

increased security for valuable papers and small articles. The present appearance of the front façade is unfortunately misleading, since half-round moldings originally surrounded each drawer and covered the exposed dovetails where the drawer dividers meet the sides of the case. Such moldings would have helped visually to unify the front and to divert the eye from the imprecise fit of the drawers.

Chalk and ink inscriptions on one of the document drawers and the back of the lower drawer have so far eluded identification. The word “Dighton” written in ink on the side of one of the document drawers does provide a clue to the origin of this desk. The town of Dighton in Bristol County, Massachusetts, may have been where this desk was made or owned in the early 18th century. The name “Durmon Cary” inscribed on the back of the bottom drawer could be the owner’s or the maker’s name, although no such name appears in local records. The inferior quality of workmanship relative to Boston desks in the same style suggests that this desk is the work of a rural cabinetmaker imitating high-style urban furniture. The cyma curves in the desk interior and the inclusion of sliding document drawers, a feature more typical of mid-18th-century desks, also suggest a later date than the general appearance of the desk might indicate at first glance.

It was Irving Lyon’s illustration of a similar desk and his comment that this was the earliest type that inspired Mrs. Radeke and her advisor, Arthur Leslie Green, to seek a “pumpkin foot” desk for the collection (Lyon 1891, fig. 48). This was one of three that they considered and the one that they favored for its unrestored condition.

TSM

1. See Jobe and Kaye 1984, pp. 226–28.

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CHILD'S DESK, 1740–60
New England, possibly eastern
Massachusetts
Maple; pine. 26 x 24½ x 14½
Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke. 20.633

Provenance:

If the pencil inscription on the underside of the center drawer in the desk compartment is of the period, an early owner was "Jabez Cram anno domini 1746"; sold by Arthur Leslie Green, Newport, Rhode Island, to Mrs. Radeke, October 6, 1924, for \$285

Condition:

This desk has led a hard life, as is often true of children's furniture. Aside from the loss of its original red stained surface, and three of the scalloped arches for the pigeonholes, the bracket feet are replacements, as are the stamped brass pulls on the bottom drawer, the screw instead of a button pull for the left loper, and the left cleat of the fall lid in cherry. Furthermore, the back of the desk is covered with a sheet of tin, and the backs of the top and middle graduated drawers have been severely gnawed away by an animal.

The high survival rate of 18th-century fall-front desks made specifically for children's use clearly suggests a concern for studious pursuits, at least on the part of parents. Since grooming children for the adult world included instilling in them an appreciation of good design, certain of these desks show a marked attention to decorative detail, especially in their interior arrangements behind the fall-front lids (fig. a). Of this group, the RISD desk and one formerly in the Lansdell K. Christie collection (Sotheby Parke Bernet, sale 3422 [October 1972], lot 19) must surely be among the finest



36



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Fig. 36a

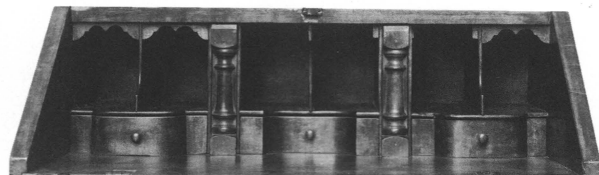


Fig. 37a

examples to survive. Each has pigeon-holes with scalloped arches, and block-fronted drawers below. While the Christie desk has a fan-carved drawer in place of a prospect door as its central feature, the absence of either of these in the RISD desk is compensated for by a pair of document drawers with applied split balusters on their fronts, and scalloped edges along the tops of their inner sides, flanking the central pair of pigeonholes. In contrast with the interior of the RISD desk, its exterior has little in the way of decorative detail beyond the thumb-nail moldings along the edge of the lid and the graduated drawers below. Its most striking feature would have been the bat wing escutcheon plates with bail handles, set off by the red stain which originally covered the surface.

As a number of children's fall-front desks were included in early collections of American furniture, they must have been considered a desirable form, without which a collection would be incomplete. In Mrs. Radeke's case, a desire to own such a desk can probably be traced back to the 1876 Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia, where an example with three drawers was prominently displayed in the New England Kitchen of 1776, and reproduced in *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Historical Register* for the fair, along with the Fuller cradle, an impressive gateleg table, and a high-back settle.¹ As she eventually acquired comparable examples of each of these forms (cats. 62, 159), it would appear that she had drawn up a mental "want list" during the summer of 1876 while serving with her mother as a hostess at the Exhibition's Rhode Island Building. Other early collectors fortunate enough to acquire a child's fall-front desk include Eugene Bolles (Heckscher 1985, p. 264), Luke Vincent Lockwood (*ibid.*, pp. 264–65), and George H. Lorimer (Parke Bernet sale 594 [October 1944], lot 749).

CPM

1. Frank Norton, ed., *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Historical Register of the United States Centennial Exposition, 1876* (New York, 1877), pp. 90, 265.

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DESK AND BOOKCASE, 1750–60
Job Townsend, Sr. (1699/1700–1765)
Newport, Rhode Island
Mahogany; chestnut, pine, yellow-poplar. 82½ x 40 x 24½
Gift of Mrs. Murray S. Danforth. 36.006

Provenance:

Owned in 1919 by the New London, Connecticut, antique dealer James Davidson, from whom purchased for the Museum in 1936

Publications:

Malcolm A. Norton, "New Light on the Block-Front," *Antiques*, v. 3 (February 1923), pp. 63–65; Nutting 1928, nos. 693, 695, 716; *Antiques*, v. 15 (April 1929), p. 276; Elizabeth T. Casey, "Early Newport Furniture," *Museum Bulletin*, RISD, v. 24 (April 1936), pp. 25–29; *Antiques*, v. 62 (December 1952), p. 483; Carpenter 1954, pp. 71–72; Comstock 1962, pl. 201; Landman 1975, p. 935; Moses 1984, p. 254.

Exhibitions:

Rhode Island Tercentenary Exhibition, RISD, 1936, p. 18, no. 12; *Hunter House Loan Exhibition*, Preservation Society of Newport County, Newport, Rhode Island, 1953.

Condition:

The original scroll pediment was removed and cornice molding added to the front of the upper section, perhaps in the 18th or early 19th century. In the 1920s, the blocks under the ogee bracket feet were also removed, probably at the same time the surface was thoroughly sanded and refinished. One "secret" drawer behind the center case of the desk's interior is missing.

Ever since its publication in *Antiques* in 1923, this desk and bookcase has been considered the touchstone of Newport case furniture. It is the only piece which has come to light bearing the label of Job Townsend (fig. a), who with his brother Christopher founded the Townsend-Goddard dynasty of cabinetmakers and pioneered the block-and-shell design, which has become its most distinctive hallmark.

Block-and-shell designs first appear in desk interiors (Heckscher 1980, p. 358). In the Job Townsend desk the interior quite typically consists of five bays which are defined by an alternating pattern of concave and convex blocking on the drawer and prospect door fronts (fig. b). The two tiers of concave drawers and prospect door are then capped by carved shells. As the lobes of these shells are still



Fig. 38a
Cabinetmaker's label on inside of prospect door.

confined within relieving arches, an early date is suggested. A similarly carved shell is found on the drawer of a dressing table now at Chipstone for which there is a bill from Job Townsend to Samuel Ward dated "1 July, 1746" (Rodriguez Roque 1984, pp. 38–9). However, a strikingly similar block-and-shell interior, with the shells also set within relieving arches, is found on the six-shell desk and bookcase at Bayou Bend, generally thought to date from the 1760s (Moses 1984, p. 321). The fact that it retains this earlier detail certainly suggests that such features of design had extended lives, and therefore must be used with caution as the basis for dating Townsend-Goddard furniture.

Other frequently encountered details of design included in the Job Townsend interior are the thin mahogany scalloped partitions which separate the pigeon-holes, with their "bird-beak" profiles, and the concave arched pencil drawers directly above. Similar scalloped partitions separate the three tiers of pigeon-holes in the upper section as well. Lastly, a well with sliding lid is incorporated into the writing surface for the purpose of providing access to the drawer below. In this instance, the drawer has interior wooden bolts at either end, which when thrown allow access only through the well (fig. c).

One aspect of Job Townsend's desk interior which is not characteristic of other Newport desks is the arrangement of the three concave drawers behind the prospect door. They are fitted into a removable case which conceals three shallow drawers at the rear of the desk, one of which is missing (fig. d). Although "secret" drawers are similarly concealed in desks made elsewhere, such as RISD's bombé desk and bookcase from Boston (cat. 41) and RISD's slant-top desk from Philadelphia (cat. 42), they are rarely found in desks from Newport.

On more elaborate Newport desks and bookcases, the façades are defined by a block-and-shell design, such as can be



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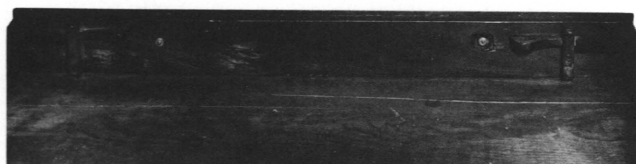


Fig. 38c



Fig. 38b



Fig. 38d



Fig. 38e
Desk and bookcase, ca. 1750–60,
Newport, Rhode Island. (Private
collection; photograph courtesy of John
Walton, Inc.)

seen in two examples at RISD (cats. 39, 40). While Job Townsend's desk relies on the two raised arched panels on the doors of the upper section for its decorative effect, this was not always the case. Like the façades of the block-and-shell desks and bookcases just cited, Job Townsend's originally incorporated a scroll pediment, with conforming panels in its tympanum, and vase-and-corkscrew finials. At some point in its history, probably quite early on, the pediment was removed in order to allow the desk to fit into a low-studded room, and this may also account for the absence of blocks on the ogee bracket feet. Among the telltale signs of the pediment's existence are two deep ridges cut into the top board. Also, the molding has been pieced out along the front to replicate the original moldings still intact on the sides. There are at least two comparable flat-front desks and bookcases with arched panels on their doors where the scroll pediments have not been removed, of which one is illustrated here (fig. e).¹ Since the absence of a pediment on the Job Townsend desk has until now not been noted, it does not appear on the modern reproduction of the desk made by Kittinger, nor does the "secret" drawer arrangement behind the prospect door on the desk's interior.

As for the history of Job Townsend's desk and bookcase, nothing is known before 1919, when it was first offered to the Museum by the New London antique dealer James Davidson.² He again offered the desk to the Museum in 1930, and on the third occasion in 1936 Mrs. Murray S. Danforth purchased it, partly with an eye to using it as the centerpiece for the *Rhode Island Tercentenary Exhibition* held at the Museum that year. Ever since that occasion this desk and bookcase has served as the centerpiece for RISD's collection of Newport furniture, providing a natural starting point for the study of the Townsend-Goddard school in which Job Townsend played a seminal role.

CPM

1. Both of these desks are in private collections.
2. Museum Committee, *Minutes*, March 5, 1919.

39

DESK AND BOOKCASE, 1761

Attributed to John Goddard

(1723–1785)

Newport, Rhode Island

Mahogany; red cedar, yellow-poplar,

pine. 97 x 45³/₁₆ x 26

Bequest of Arthur B. and Martha Lisle.

67.166

Provenance:

This desk is thought to be the one acquired in Newport about 1870 by Dr. Thomas Mawney Potter (1814–1890) of Kingston, Rhode Island; descended to his sister, Mary E. Potter (d. 1901); to his nephew, James Brown Mason Potter, Jr. (d. 1916), from whom acquired by Arthur B. Lisle ca. 1915

Publications:

Isham 1927, cover; *Antiques*, v. 15 (April 1929), pp. 276–77; *Bulletin*, RISD, v. 24 (April 1936), pp. 26–27; Carpenter 1954, pp. 69–70; Garrett 1971, p. 890; Landman 1975, p. 934; Moses 1984, fig. 8.10; Kirk, et al., 1984, p. 94; Jobe and Kaye 1984, p. 36.

Exhibitions:

Newport Furniture Loan Exhibition, RISD, 1926–27; *Rhode Island Tercentenary Exhibition*, RISD, 1936, pp. 16–17, no. 6; *Hunter House Loan Exhibition*, Preservation Society of Newport County, 1953; *New England Furniture: The Colonial Era*, DeCordova Museum, Lincoln, Massachusetts, 1985.

Condition:

According to inscriptions on the middle drawer behind the prospect door, this desk was first repaired in 1813 by Thomas Goddard, Newport. Subsequently repaired in 1863 and again in 1879 (see text). The rear bracket feet have been replaced. The moldings in the pediment have been repaired, and all but one of the cedar panels on the inner sides of the bookcase section are replacements. The escutcheons on the bookcase doors and several on the lower drawers have been replaced. Conserved in 1986 at the SPNEA Conservation Center, Waltham, Massachusetts, under the supervision of Robert Mussey, with funds provided by the Estate of Mr. and Mrs. Arthur B. Lisle, and with the generous support of Mr. and Mrs. George M. Kaufman.

DESK AND BOOKCASE, 1760–85

Attributed to John Goddard (1723–1785)

Newport, Rhode Island

Mahogany; cedar, yellow-poplar, pine.

101 x 42 x 24

Bequest of Charles Pendleton. 04.042

Publications:

Lockwood 1904, pls. 56–57; *Bulletin*, RISD, v. 26 (January 1938), pp. 13–14; Lockwood 1921, v. 1, fig. 274; Landman 1975, p. 936; Moses 1984, fig. 8.11; *Museum Handbook*, RISD, 1985, p. 318.

Condition:

Refinished in 1946 on the recommendation of John Maxon. Except for the bookcase door escutcheon plates, the brasses are not original. All three doors have suffered minor losses at the corners and repairs to the hinges and to the adjoining mortise and tenon joints. The doors were patched, the joints reglued, and the hinges reset in 1986, under the supervision of Robert Mussey, SPNEA Conservation Center.

Fewer than a dozen desks and bookcases are known that have blocking and carved shells in both upper and lower sections. On the basis of their design and construction, they can be divided into at least two stylistic groups.¹ Minor variations in the arrangement of the bookcase shelves and dividers, carving of the shells, and the design of the finials, are consistent within the two groups. Further variations in the base moldings, pediment blocking, and the feet on desks in the second group suggest the work of two or more cabinet shops.

None of the eleven known desks is signed. The group of four, which includes desks made for three of the four Brown brothers, John (Yale), Joseph (RHS), and Nicholas (private collection), and the related desk in the Karolik collection, are often attributed to John Goddard on the basis of a letter he wrote in 1776 to Nicholas Brown informing him of a desk and bookcase on hand in his shop (Cooper 1973, p. 334). The inscription on the Lisle desk and bookcase at RISD, "Made by John Goddard 1761 and repaired by Thomas Goddard his son 1813," although probably added in 1813, provides additional evidence of John Goddard's work and links his name to desks in both stylistic groups. The Pendleton desk has recently been attributed to Goddard's son Daniel (b. 1747), but solely on the basis of the number of

flutes in its quarter columns and the similarity of its carved shells to those on the one piece signed by Daniel Goddard (Moses 1984, p. 271). Until more is known about Daniel Goddard and the practice of carvers within the Goddard and Townsend shops, this attribution must remain highly speculative. After all, other cabinetmakers in Newport and Providence besides the Goddards and Townsends were also producing block-and-shell designs.²

The two desks and bookcases at RISD are so closely related that they can be confidently attributed to the same shop. The drawers, for example, are of nearly identical dimensions and fit interchangeably from one case to the other. Both desks also have an unusual half-round molding added to the base molding across the front of the case. The Pendleton desk is the only one of the six related desks with an open pediment, thus resembling the Brown family desks. Its unusually flat blocking in the pediment also relates it to the two Potter family desks (cat. 39; MFA [Randall 1965, cat. 62]).

The degree to which the patrons determined these variations within the finished product is not clear. Contrary to assumptions that such expensive items must have been "bespoke" or custom-made work, John Goddard's letter to Nicholas Brown suggests that some of the desks could have been purchased off the floor of the shop. One is also tempted to assume that peculiarities, such as the direction in which the bookcase doors folded open, were more than happenstance. On the Brown family desks, for example, the double doors fold to the right, as do those on the two Potter family desks (fig. 39a), and the related desk in the Karolik collection. On the other four, the doors fold to the left (fig. 40a), yet no correlation has been established between the direction of the folding doors and their owners' right- or left-handedness, or other possible factors. Perhaps the design and carving of the three-paneled doors and the obvious difficulty of hanging them and fashioning special hinges and locks for them was of greater concern to the cabinetmaker than to the patron, whose chief concern was the desk's contents and its impressive appearance.

The professions of the original owners that can be identified were either commerce or the law. Both pursuits required letters and accounts to be written and stored systematically, and both encouraged the outward demonstration of one's success that such impressive desks and bookcases provided. The list of books

contained in Joseph Brown's desk included titles from many disciplines sacred and secular, literary and scientific. One of the few other bits of evidence regarding the contents of the lower drawers appears in a letter from John Brown to his daughter in which he refers to her brocade frock kept in "the Lore Draw of the Book Case..." (Cooper 1973, p. 338).

The Lisle desk and bookcase at RISD is one of the best documented of all the eleven known. There is no reason to doubt the inscription on two of the drawers behind the prospect door stating that it was made in 1761 by John Goddard and repaired by his son Thomas Goddard (1765–1858) in 1813. These inscriptions make this desk one of the touchstones of all Goddard attributions and the earliest known dated Newport blockfront piece. They also provide an unusual record of its subsequent repairs by several generations of cabinetmakers in Newport and Providence. Several unusual ornamental details distinguish this desk and bookcase from the others. For example, it is the only desk with carved leaves on the ogee bracket feet, although similar carving exists on the feet of two bureau tables attributed to Daniel Goddard (Moses 1984, figs. 6.13 and 7.22). A second feature unique to this desk is the design of the finials. They are the inverse of all the others, which are shaped like urns with fluted sides and plain convex tops. These, on the other hand, have plain bases and concave tops decorated with two layers of reeding rather than the more common fluting. Long suspected to have been assembled incorrectly, recent examination with x-ray photography has revealed that the urn and its base are turned from a single piece of wood, not doweled together, and that the flame is a separate piece inserted into the top of the urn (fig. 39b). As on the other fluted finials, the reeding does not cover the entire surface.

An unusual aspect of the bookcase interior is the false construction of the sides to create shallow compartments between the inner and outer boards. Cedar panels are cleverly held in place between the bookcase shelves and kept flush by metal springs. Unlike the traditional "secret" compartments behind the prospect doors of desk or the wells beneath the surface of the writing compartments, the presence of these compartments had eluded curators for the past fifty years.

The remaining inscriptions on the drawers provide an unusually complete record of repairs carried out in the



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Fig. 39a

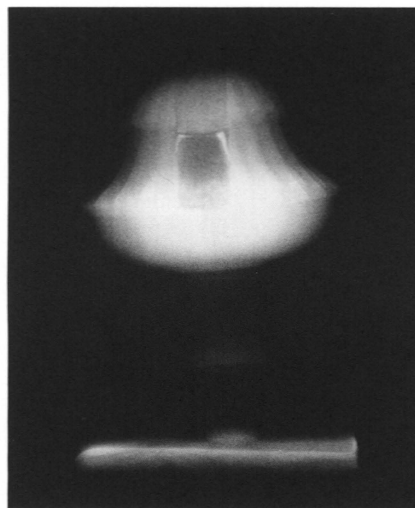


Fig. 39b
X-radiograph of finial revealing the integral construction of the urn and its base, with the flame doweled into the top.

course of the 19th century, beginning with Thomas Goddard in 1813. The precise nature of his work is difficult to distinguish, although it is not surprising that a working desk required some attention fifty years after it was made. Fifty years later, in 1863, the desk once again entered a cabinetmaker's shop for repairs, this time carried out by Langley and Bennet, furniture dealers at 10 Franklin Street in Newport. Sixteen years later, in 1879, the Potters turned to craftsmen in Providence for the first time, perhaps because inland train transportation had become more convenient than shipping from Kingston across Narragansett Bay to Newport.

One notation states that the desk was



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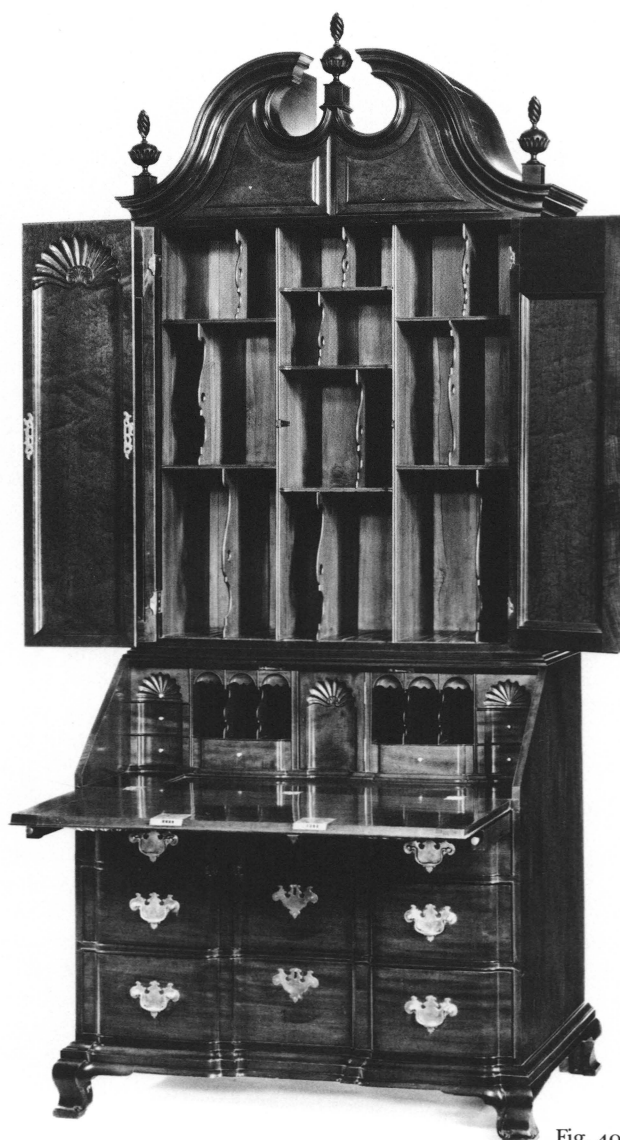


Fig. 40a

“repaired, scraped and varnished by Cleveland Bros.”; another records specifically that it was repaired and polished by R. Minkler. A Robert Minkler appears in the Providence Directory for 1879 as a cabinetmaker working for Cleveland Bros., a large firm with furniture warehouses at 108 North Main Street. In the century since the 1879 repairs and refinishing, the common brown varnish had deteriorated and many of the previous repairs to the drawers, base, and bookcase doors had either weakened or become unsightly. In 1986, the desk underwent extensive restoration and refinishing at the SPNEA Conservation Center.

TSM

1. Four have open pediments that end in carved rosettes: MFA (Hipkiss 1941, no. 19); Rhode Island Historical Society (Ott 1965, cat. 67); Yale University Art Gallery (Montgomery and Kane 1976, cat. 100), and a private collection. One has an open pediment, but without carved rosettes (cat. 40). Five others have enclosed pediments without carved rosettes: RISD (cat. 39); MMA (Heckscher 1985, cat. 62); Winterthur (Downs 1952, no. 232); and Bayou Bend (Warren 1975, cat. 135).
2. Benjamin Baker of Newport made a high chest (Cooper 1980, p. 27) and a clock case with shells similar to those

associated with the Townsends and Goddards (Old Sturbridge Village). A desk and bookcase with three shells is attributed to Grindall Rawson of Providence (Monahan 1980, pp. 134–37).

DESK AND BOOKCASE, 1760–90
 Boston, Massachusetts
 Mahogany; white pine. 98 x 42 x 23
 Bequest of Charles L. Pendleton. 04.011

Provenance:

Said to have been found in Portsmouth, New Hampshire

Publications:

Lockwood 1904, pl. 9; Lockwood 1921, v. 1, p. 256; Landman 1975, p. 938.

Condition:

Cleaned and refinished in 1946. All four feet have been replaced, although the knee brackets and many original glue blocks were retained. The central drop is original. An 18th-century inscription "Bottom" appears on both the bottom board of the bookcase and the bottom board of the desk. Also on the underside of the top is a chalk rendering of a cyma curve like that on the panels of the bookcase doors. The pediment is a late 19th-century restoration, and extensive repairs have been made to the bookcase interior and to the interior drawers and compartments. The finial is a 19th-century replacement. Pendleton's rococo-style brasses were replaced in 1946.

In an era before filing cabinets and safe deposit boxes, when business was often conducted at home by individuals who depended on extensive correspondence and whose finances were recorded in multiple ledgers and account books, a desk and bookcase served many practical functions. Far more than a mere writing surface, a desk with a classically inspired pediment and an imposing swelled base also served as conspicuous proof of the owner's success and his lofty status, no less a monument to the owner than the mansion that frequently housed such furniture.

The bookcase portion of this desk, divided with shelves and surrounded by cubbyholes, provided for books as well as for alphabetized arrangement of correspondence. The interior of the desk has even smaller drawers for writing implements and accessories. The section behind the prospect door can be removed by releasing a spring catch through a hole in the top. Slim document drawers pull out from behind the twin columns, and nests of small drawers fill the back of the void. Whether such compartments were ever "secret" is doubtful, yet few people in the mid-18th century were likely to be familiar with the inner workings of a desk and bookcase, one of the most expensive pieces of furniture in its day. Evidently

money and documents were among the valuables locked in desks, as a passage from the *Boston Gazette* of 1785 suggests, bemoaning the fate of Boston's patriots who "lent hard money for paper money which now lie dormant in their desks."¹

Like the Boston chest of drawers (cat. 11), this bombé desk and bookcase has an unusual serpentine base. Of the twenty or so bombé desks and bookcases known, only three others have this feature. None of the serpentine desks nor any of the related chests of drawers is signed. Three of the other desks, however, are signed by Benjamin Frothingham, George Bright, and James McMillan, while four others have been attributed to John Coggsell and to Gibbs Atkins.² The variations in their design and construction confirm that several shops were making bombé furniture, as well as the related straight-sided desks with serpentine drawers.³

The different methods of drawer construction on bombé desks and bookcases correspond to the three methods found on the chests of drawers (see cat. 11). On this example, the drawer sides are fully shaped to conform with the curved sides of the case, the most difficult solution in terms of the labor required and the small margin for error. As with other Boston case furniture, the interior details such as dovetails and drawer bottoms are surprisingly crude, evidence of hasty practices in urban shops producing large quantities of furniture, or perhaps the patron's desire to allocate the bulk of his expenditure to the all-important exterior.

On occasion, Boston customers did balk at the poor quality of case pieces. For example, a suit filed in 1804 against the cabinetmaker Elisha Adams for shoddy workmanship records the outrage of one customer upon receiving an expensive new desk and bookcase. James McGibbon, a limner, had ordered "a certain piece of cabinet furniture called a secretary" that was to be "made of mahogany and in a neat, strong, and workmanlike manner. . . ." What he received instead was "the said secretary in an unworkmanlike manner and wholly unfit for use, and without any brads or nails to hold the joints together and only stuck together with glue and putty."⁴

Although it is unlikely that this desk was ever in such deplorable condition, it was extensively restored sometime in the late 19th century, perhaps even before Pendleton acquired it. The moldings in the pediment, the uneven quality of the dentils, and breaks in the back boards indicate that the portion above the frieze

was entirely replaced. It is reasonable to assume that the desk originally had a pediment but difficult to determine whether it had a straight pitch or broken scrolls. There are two bombé desks and bookcases with flat tops, but both probably originally had pediments that were removed at a later date, as with cat. 38, to suit a smaller space.⁵ Among the other desks, pitched and broken-scroll pediments appear to have been equally popular.

A second major area of restoration was to the lower desk interior (fig. a). It is instructive for its quality as well as for what it reveals about an earlier philosophy of restoration and about early misconceptions of regional styles of American furniture. The shells of the prospect door and both side drawers, the arrangement of the drawers, and even the contour of the cubbyhole dividers have been altered to conform with the typical Newport desk interior. While some Boston desk interiors are admittedly similar to Newport examples, this restoration was more likely based upon the prevailing belief in Pendleton's era that all bombé and blockfront furniture originated in Newport, not Boston. A similar misconception accounts for the addition of a Newport-style base to a Boston blockfront chest of drawers in Pendleton's collection (Lockwood 1904, pl. 6).

Before the 1940s, little information had been compiled and few books published that discussed regional styles in American furniture. Countless dealers' advertisements and auction catalogues consistently attributed blockfront and bombé furniture to John Goddard, of whom Walter Dyer believed "it is by no means improbable that he was apprenticed to Thomas Chippendale."⁶ In the same spirit of "Chippendale Romance," the pediment and finial of this desk and bookcase were restored to match plate 107 of Chippendale's *Director*. At the same time, ornate Rococo Revival brass hardware was added. In Pendleton's own house, this piece stood in the entrance hall and served as a display case for his outstanding collection of Whieldon pottery.

TSM



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Fig. 41a

1. Quoted in Charles Warren, "Samuel Adams and the Sans Souci Club in 1785," *Massachusetts Historical Society Proceedings*, v. 60 (1927), p. 321.
2. The three other bombé desks and bookcases with reverse-serpentine bases are at Winterthur (Downs 1952, cat. 227, attributed to Coggs; Montgomery 1966, cat. 176) and at Bayou Bend (Warren 1975, cat. 134). The Frothingham desk is at the U.S. State Department (Vincent 1974, p. 142). The George Bright desk is at the MFA (Randall 1965, cat. 64). The James Mcmillian desk was sold by Sotheby's, sale 3720 (January 25, 1975), lot 1054. Desks attributed to Gibbs Atkins include one in the Karolik collection, MFA (Hipkiss 1941, no. 21) and one

- descended from Ebenezer Gay (Vincent 1974, p. 187). Others are at Bayou Bend (Warren 1975, cat. 133); MMA (Heckscher 1985, cat. 183); Historic Deerfield (Fales 1976, p. 237); Chipstone (Rodriguez Roque 1984, cat. 28); Harvard University (Fogg 1972, no. 165); Springfield Science Museum (Wadsworth 1985, cat. 129); Old Dartmouth Historical Society (Vincent 1974, p. 188); Dietrich American Foundation (*Antiques*, v. 125 [May 1984], p. 1115); one formerly in the Taradash collection; (*Antiques*, v. 49 [June 1946], p. 352); and one illustrated in Lockwood 1921, v. 1, fig. 281.
3. Slant-front desks with similar serpentine façades are in the collection of MMA (Heckscher 1985, cat. 174);

- MFA (acc. no. 81.662); and illustrated in *Antiques*, v. 108 (September 1975), p. 339, and *Antiques*, v. 110 (September 1976), p. 511.
4. *McGibbon v. Adams*, Suffolk County Court of Common Pleas (October 1804), case no. 620.
5. See the examples at the Maryland Historical Society (Weidman 1984, cat. 24) and one formerly in the Jacob Margolis Collection (Anderson Galleries, sale 1889 [November 5–7, 1925], lot 389). The pediment of the Hancock family desk and bookcase (Dietrich American Foundation) has also been restored.
6. Walter A. Dyer, "John Goddard and His Block-Fronts," *Antiques*, v. 1 (May 1922), p. 207.

DESK, 1760–90

Pennsylvania

Mahogany; Atlantic white cedar, yellow-poplar, red gum. $41\frac{1}{2} \times 40\frac{3}{4} \times 21\frac{3}{8}$
Bequest of Isaac C. Bates. 13.421

Provenance:

According to tradition, belonged to Ebenezer Knight Dexter (1773–1824), who inherited it from his father, Knight Dexter (1734–1814), both of Providence; bequeathed to Richard Salisbury (1784–1843); probably to Richard Salisbury, Jr. (1809–1847); descent unclear to the donor

Exhibition:

Hunter House, Preservation Society of Newport County, 1970–85.

Several aspects of the design and construction of this desk indicate that it was made in Philadelphia, in spite of its long history of ownership in Providence by members of the Dexter family. Its construction with full dust boards of yellow-poplar framed into the sides of the case is unusual for New England case furniture. Likewise, the desk interior (fig. a) with serpentine drawers on a molded base and fluted column drawers flanking the prospect door is typical of Philadelphia desks made around 1770, of which several documented examples are known.¹

A second desk with a long Providence history is similarly constructed of yellow-poplar and cedar, woods commonly used by Rhode Island cabinetmakers, and has similar serpentine drawers on the interior (Jobe and Kaye 1984, no. 45). Given the links between Quakers in Philadelphia and Rhode Island, and the extensive export trade in furniture from both cities, it is not unlikely that Knight Dexter, a successful merchant, imported this piece of furniture from Philadelphia.

Although plain by comparison to the blocked and serpentine facades of many of the best Newport and Boston-area desks of the same period, the exterior of this desk is enlivened by the vibrant grain of its mahogany lid and graduated drawer fronts. For the slant top in particular, the cabinetmaker selected a board whose crotch grain has a flame-like brilliance. The interior is quite complex, having an elaborate locking device within the removable section behind the prospect door that prevents the pair of document drawers from sliding forward. Behind the center section are three additional drawers.

According to tradition, this desk was inherited by Ebenezer Knight Dexter



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Fig. 42a

(1773–1824), a prosperous dry-goods merchant in Providence, who bequeathed to the city a forty-acre parcel of land with the condition that an almshouse be erected and “inclosed with an extensive and permanent wall.”² Today the same wall encloses the Brown University playing fields. The stylistic evidence suggests that this desk was made at least by the time Ebenezer was born if not before, and it is probably the same “large desk with all the papers therein” that Dexter’s father, Knight Dexter (1734–1814), bequeathed to him in 1814. Ebenezer Knight Dexter had no children but stipulated in his will of 1824 that “as a token of regard I give and bequeath to Mr. Richard Salisbury with whom I have always had friendly intercourse my mahogany desk which belonged to my late honored father. . . .”³

One of the most striking features of this desk is the masonic emblem painted on the back of the mirrored prospect door (fig. b). The painting depicts a square and compasses in gold and silver, symbols and colors associated with the jewel of the Past Master of a masonic lodge. Symbols of freemasonry were inlaid on the prospect and bookcase doors of other desks that may have served as lodge furniture or displayed the symbols to ward off thieves.⁴ In this instance, the inconspicuous placement of the Past Master’s jewel may have been a response to the violently anti-masonic fervor of the 1830s that caused many lodges to close their doors until the 1840s.

The only known Mason among the

likely owners of this desk was James Salisbury, the father-in-law of Richard Salisbury, Jr. He served as the Master of Mt. Vernon Lodge no. 4 in Providence between 1831 and 1833, during the height of the anti-freemasonry movement.⁵ Whether Salisbury actually used or owned this desk is difficult to establish, although when the Providence lodge temporarily suspended its activities in the 1830s, he was entrusted with the lodge’s funds and deed of property, which might account for the addition of a masonic emblem on the compartment where he or another Past Master could have hid documents for safekeeping.

TSM

1. See PMA 1976, no. 84; Sotheby’s sale 5295 (Feb. 2, 1985), lot 1151; Sotheby’s sale 4911M (April 29, 1982), lot 81; Sotheby’s sale 4529Y (Jan. 28–31) 1981, lot 1463.
2. *The Rhode Island American*, August 20, 1824.
3. For Knight Dexter’s will, see Providence Will no. A4198, Book 11, p. 461; and for Ebenezer Knight Dexter’s, Providence Will no. A4860, Book 13, p. 186.
4. Barbara Franco, *Masonic Symbols in American Decorative Arts*. Lexington: Scottish Rite Museum of our National Heritage, 1976, pp. 31–32; Skinner’s sale 1000 (October 27, 1984), lot 162.
5. Henry W. Rugg, *History of Freemasonry in Rhode Island* (Providence, 1895), p. 448.

43

DESK AND BOOKCASE, 1770–1800
Massachusetts, probably Essex County
Mahogany; pine. 90½ x 43 x 23¾
Given in memory of Dr. Fenner H.
Peckham. 16.122

Provenance:

Dr. Fenner Harris Peckham, Jr. (1843–1915), of East Killingly, Connecticut and Providence

Exhibition:

Placed on loan at the Stephen Hopkins House, Providence (National Society of the Colonial Dames of America), 1985.

Condition:

The escutcheon on the desk lid is broken, and the molding on the upper right side of the desk is a replacement. The pulls on three drawers in the bookcase section have been replaced. There is a new escutcheon on the prospect door, and the hinges on the desk lid have been replaced.

Many traits associated with Salem and Newburyport workmanship are seen in this desk and bookcase. The square blocking of the desk portion on tall bracket feet, shell pendant in the middle of the skirt, carved rosette below the central finial, and carved concave shells behind the bookcase doors all relate to several documented desks and bookcases from Essex County.¹ The round-arched paneled bookcase doors and flame finials are common features of Massachusetts desks and bookcases, as is the two-tiered arrangement of the interior drawers below cubbyholes. Furthermore, the squat, bulbous colonettes on the front of the document drawers relate specifically to a group of desks with Newburyport histories.²

When this desk and bookcase was presented to the Museum in 1916, it was naturally assumed to have been made in Newport by John Goddard, the cabinetmaker whose name was then synonymous with any and all blocked case furniture. The donor had descended from the Peckham family, who in the 18th century controlled large tracts of land across southern New England from Stonington, Connecticut, to New Bedford, Massachusetts.³ At the time this secretary was probably made, the Peckhams were farmers in Dartmouth and New Bedford.

On the other hand, because the donor, his father, and grandfather all lived in Killingly, Connecticut, the possibility exists that this desk was made there by a local cabinetmaker. Sophisticated block-front desks and bookcases with round-arched paneled doors in the Boston

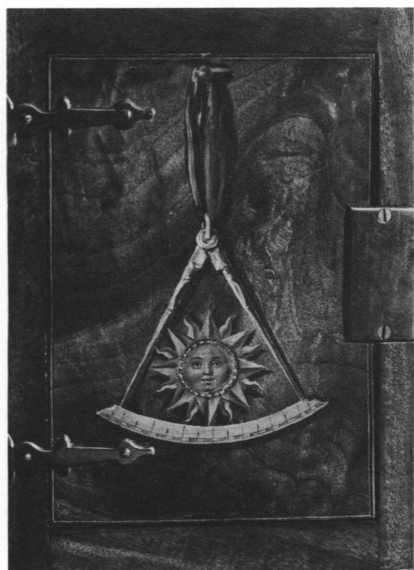


Fig. 42b



manner were certainly made in Connecticut.⁴ And by the 1810s, at least one Boston cabinetmaker, Charles Tuttle, was trading directly with William Leavens, a cabinetmaker in Killingly.⁵ Such links suggest one method for the transmission of styles, if not actual furniture, between Boston and eastern Connecticut. Nevertheless, the materials, design, and construction of this desk and bookcase conform to Eastern Massachusetts examples and show little of the variation one might expect to find in a vernacular interpretation of this form.

TSM

1. See Swan 1945; Fales 1965, no. 44; Sack 6, pp. 1640–41; *Antiques*, v. 117 (February 1980), p. 253; and Heckscher 1985, cat. 180.
2. See Heckscher 1985, cat. 180 and p. 356, fig. 180; *Antiques*, v. 86 (July 1964), p. 10.
3. Stephen Farnum Peckham, *The English Ancestors and American Descendants of John Peckham of Newport, Rhode Island* (New York, 1922), p. 214.
4. See Kirk 1967, no. 128; Heckscher 1985, cat. 182. A desk and bookcase with many of the same features as this desk has been attributed both to Connecticut and later to Salem (see *Antiques*, v. 111 [March 1977], p. 423, and *Antiques*, v. 117 [February 1980], p. 253).
5. *Leavens v. Tuttle*, Suffolk County Court of Common Pleas (March 1813), Extended Record Book, fol. 214.



Fig. 43a

44

DESK, 1760–1800

Coastal Essex County, Massachusetts

Mahogany; pine. 44 x 46 x 25

Gift of Mrs. John Trowbridge
Nightingale in memory of John
Trowbridge Nightingale. 78.191

Provenance:

Descended through the family of Samuel
Nightingale (1782–1851) of Providence
to his great-grandson, John Trowbridge
Nightingale, the husband of the donor

Publication:

Monkhouse 1980, p. 131.

Condition:

The desk was thoroughly refinished in
the late 19th century.

This desk's reverse serpentine front, robust claw-and-ball feet, central drop ornament attached to the skirt, and overall generous proportions indicate coastal Essex County as a likely place of origin. Furthermore, the distinctive arched blocks found on the block-and-shell lid, and the equally distinctive carved oval sunbursts found on the interior drawer fronts (fig. a) should make it possible to pinpoint this desk to a particular shop, or at least "school" of cabinetmakers. Four other reverse serpentine desks with claw-and-ball feet have been published exhibiting these same features, of which the one illustrated in Parke-Bernet sale catalogue 439 (March 4–5, 1943), lot 337, is virtually identical, including proportions and brasses. The other three closely related desks are illustrated in Parke-Bernet sale catalogue 182 (March 15–16, 1941), lot 428; *Antiques*, v. 94 (August 1968), p. 161; and *Antiques*, v. 126 (October 1984), inside cover. The latter is the only one to include a bookcase, and probably the best known through its illustration in Albert Sack's *Fine Points of American Furniture* (New York, 1950), p. 163. RISD's desk is the only one out of this group of four related examples to have string inlay on its prospect door and flanking document drawers. Stylistically this detail

suggests a date around 1800 for the desk, if it is original. While the door and drawer fronts with string inlay might be a later addition, the Marblehead Historical Society's Jeremiah Lee Mansion has a reverse serpentine desk without the distinctive block-and-shell lid, but an identical string inlaid prospect door which appears to be original.

Unfortunately, as none of these desks seem to have a maker's signature or label,

or even a known history of continuous ownership, their origin remains elusive. Although the RISD desk descended in the family of the prominent Providence merchant, Samuel Nightingale, it probably came by way of marriage or inheritance, because Providence residents as a rule purchased their furniture locally or in New York City, and rarely in Massachusetts.

CPM



Fig. 44a

LADY'S DESK, 1790–1810
 Boston, Massachusetts
 Mahogany; pine. 43¼ x 37¼ x 19
 Bequest of Arthur B. and Martha Lisle,
 by exchange. 71.075

Provenance:
 Israel Sack, Inc., New York

Publications:
Antiques, v. 92 (November 1967), inside
 cover; Sack 3, p. 771; Landman 1975, p.
 938.

Whereas the earlier desks and desks and bookcases in this collection reflect the influence of Georgian English models, this smaller, more delicate lady's desk with sliding tambour shutters reflects the influence of the French *bonheur du jour* with a *cartonnier* for papers on top. Published by Sheraton in *The Cabinet-Maker and Upholsterer's Drawing-Book* (1793), this form of small writing table gained popularity in fashionable circles in this country after the Revolution, coinciding with many Americans' initial enthusiasm for the cause of French republicanism. By the last decade of the 18th century, many Bostonians were both designing houses and buying furniture in the French taste. The notable collections of French paintings and decorative arts formed by Richard Codman and James Swan were only two of the more conspicuous examples of the widespread craze in Boston for things French.¹

New England cabinetmakers produced dozens of tambour desks and secretaries similar to this one. They are frequently attributed to the shop of John and Thomas Seymour, largely on the basis of the inlays and veneering on three or four labeled or documented pieces, in spite of the fact that these details vary considerably, even on the labeled pieces, and provide an unsound basis for identifying the work of an individual craftsman. The Seymours' own newspaper advertisements of 1805 and 1812 make clear that some of their "useful and ornamental cabinet furniture" was made only "under the direction of Thomas Seymour," an explicit declaration of the widespread system of collaboration among specialist carvers, turners, and inlay-makers.²

Nevertheless, several features of this desk demonstrate the work of a highly skilled designer and cabinetmaker. The drawers, for example, are beautifully assembled with symmetrical flitches of veneer whose grain recalls the swags occasionally seen on the tambour shutters of other desks. The drawer fronts

are framed by extremely fine lightwood stringing, cross-banding, and finely beaded edges. The keyholes are framed by precisely cut and fitted diamond-shaped pieces of ivory, as on some of the finest Boston furniture of the period. Likewise, the brass and enamel drawer pulls represent an even greater expenditure than imported brass hardware required. These have enameled backs that were probably made at one of the Bilston enamel factories in Staffordshire or at Liverpool and imported to this country along with knobs for looking glasses and for tying back bed hangings and curtains.³ Such enamel hardware was often decorated with genre scenes, patriotic images, or Neo-classical motifs, such as the Four Seasons.

Like the labeled desk at Winterthur (Montgomery 1966, no. 184), the shutters are separated by only a thin inlaid pilaster that matches the two at either end. Below it, a third ivory-fitted keyhole for locking the shutters is concealed by the hinged writing surface. The double sets of bellflower inlays beside the drawers and at the tops of the legs are perhaps less delicate than those on the Winterthur desk but still show that unusual care was taken to simulate shading by scorching the pieces in hot sand. An unusual detail is the wavy line

inlaid along the inner edge of the hinged writing surface. It is found on other pieces attributed to the Seymours (Sack 1, p. 68), and in this instance provides whimsical contrast to the decidedly rectilinear lines of the rest of the piece.
 TSM



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1. See Celia Jackson Otto, "The Secretary with the Tambour Cartonnier," *Antiques*, v. 77 (April 1960), pp. 378–83. For the taste and collecting of French art in Boston, see Howard C. Rice, "James Swan, Agent of the French Republic, 1794–1796," *The New England Quarterly*, v. 10 (September 1937), pp. 465–86; Eleanor P. Delorne, "James Swan's French Furniture," *Antiques*, v. 107 (March 1975), pp. 452–61; Francis J.B. Watson, "The Eye of Thomas Jefferson. Americans and French 18th Century Furniture in the Age of Jefferson," *Antiques*, v. 110 (July 1976), pp. 118–25.
2. Richard H. Randall, Jr., "Seymour Furniture Problems," *Bulletin of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston*, v. 57 (1959), pp. 105, 113.
3. See Christine Adams, "Battersea Enamel Knobs," *Antiques*, v. 2 (August 1922), pp. 73–75.

LADY'S DESK AND BOOKCASE,
1790–1820

Probably Boston area or possibly
Providence

Mahogany with mahogany and maple
veneers; pine, chestnut. 76½ x 36½ x 22
Bequest of Jonathan Edwards Harlow in
memory of Ella Hodges Harlow. 35.268

Publications:

Stoneman 1965, no. 16; Monahan 1965,
p. 578; Landman 1975, p. 923.

Condition:

Repaired in 1950 by August W. Mende,
Providence. Glass and some surrounding
moldings on doors replaced. Brass hard-
ware and finials not original (handles
and finials supplied by Israel Sack, Inc.).
Blue interior paint was added in 1946 by
John Maxon. Corners of desk lid
repaired. Bottom of right drawer in
upper case replaced.

Many features of this desk and bookcase
resemble the products of Boston and
North Shore cabinetmakers who worked
collaboratively with local turners,
carvers, gilders, and glass painters. The
reeded legs ending in tapered feet,
drawers with matched veneers and cross-
banding around the edges, and reverse-
painted glass panels with reeded pilasters
at the bottom of the bookcase section
appear on a number of desks and book-
cases generally attributed to Boston and
Salem, although cabinetmakers in other
parts of urban and rural New England
also produced similar designs.

The lower half resembles a chest of
drawers, or bureau, a more stylish form
of furniture by 1800 than the old-
fashioned slant-front desk. According to
Thomas Sheraton, in 1803 the latter
were “nearly obsolete in London; at least
they are so amongst fashionable people.
I have, however, endeavored to retrieve
their obscurity, by adding to them an
open book case and modernizing the
lower part...”¹

The scale of the desk, much smaller
and more delicate than the massive desks
and bookcases of the 18th century, is said
to have been well suited to ladies' use,
although the new designs did not
exclude their traditional ownership by
men. The sudden shift in nomenclature
of the period to include many new
drawing and writing tables specifically
intended for “ladies” coincided with the
proliferation of girls' schools. The new
terms may also reflect a clever strategy to
create new markets for an essentially old
product. At the same time, the wide-

spread introduction of large break-front
bookcases and bookcases with secretary
drawers reflects the growth of personal
libraries, as people began reading
extensively for pleasure rather than
poring intensively over a few liturgical
texts.²

The *risd* desk has much in common
with two related desks attributed to John
and Thomas Seymour that have very
similar, though less intricate, glass panels
in their bookcase sections (Greenlaw
1974, cat. 104; Sack 6, pp. 1596–97).
The glass was probably supplied by a
carver and gilder to several cabinet shops
in Boston. John Doggett, for example,
offered reverse-painted glass tablets of
several sizes and descriptions for
furniture, looking glasses, and patent
timepieces made by the Willards and
other clockmakers in the Boston area.
Several decorative painters, including
John Ritto Penniman, Aaron Willard, Jr.,
Willard's brother-in-law, Spencer Nolen
and Nolen's partner Samuel Curtis, also
produced painted clock dials and
reverse-painted glass panels sold by John
Doggett.³

As a group these three desks display
various options of design and decoration,
such as the shape of the pediment,
additional drawers in the bookcase sec-

tion, and carving on the legs. Despite
these variations, their overall consistency
suggests a common origin in the Boston
area. On the other hand, internal evi-
dence such as chestnut drawer bottoms,
a history of ownership in the Providence-
Attleboro area, and the fact that Thomas
Howard, Joseph Rawson, and other local
cabinetmakers were all making furniture
in a similar style, has led some experts to
attribute this desk to Providence.⁴ Given
the apparently indiscriminate use of sec-
ondary woods by cabinetmakers and the
very general nature of the desk's simi-
larities to Rhode Island furniture, this
tempting attribution must remain tenta-
tive in the absence of corroborative
evidence of other Rhode Island Federal-
period furniture.

TSM



1. Sheraton, *The Cabinet Dictionary*
(London, 1803), quoted in
Montgomery 1966, p. 217.

2. See Cooke 1982, pp. 24–25.

3. An account book kept by John
Doggett between 1803 and 1809 and
a letter book from the 1820s are in
the Joseph Downs Manuscript Col-
lection, Winterthur Museum.

4. Monahan 1965, p. 578.

LADY'S WRITING TABLE AND CHAIR, 1903
 William C. Codman (1839–1912),
 designer
 Providence, Rhode Island (b. England)
 Frank (or Franz) Ziegler, modeler and
 leather carver
 Providence, Rhode Island
 Charles R. Yandell & Co., upholsterer
 New York City
 Gorham Co. (1831–), manufacturer
 Providence, Rhode Island
 Ebony, with ivory and silver mounts, gilt
 embossed leather seat and back, and
 marquetry panels composed of boxwood,
 redwood, thuyawood, ivory, mother-of-
 pearl, and silver; mahogany. Table: 50 x
 50 x 28; chair: 30 x 14 x 19 x 16½ (seat
 height)
 Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Frederick B.
 Thurber. 58.095

Provenance:
 Gorham Company; sold about 1915 to
 August Heckscher; given to his daughter
 Antoinette Heckscher, who became the
 Viscountess Esher; Christy's of Kent,
 Ltd., London, 1953, from whom
 purchased by the donors

Publications:
 "Some Recent Examples of Gorham
 Silver," *The Craftsman*, v. 7 (January
 1905), p. 449; Gorham promotional
 booklet for *Panama-Pacific Exposition*, San
 Francisco, 1915; Frederick B. Thurber,
The Memoirs of An Ancient Mariner (Provi-
 dence, 1965), pp. 34–37; Davidson
 1969, pp. 262–63; Bishop 1972, p. 461;
 Robert Bishop, *How to Know American
 Antique Furniture* (New York: E.P. Dutton,
 1973), p. 194; Charles H. Carpenter, Jr.,
Gorham Silver 1831–1981 (New York:
 Dodd, Mead, 1983), pp. 207–9; *Museum
 Handbook*, RISD, 1985, p. 327.

Exhibitions:
St. Louis Universal Exposition, 1904;
Panama-Pacific Universal Exposition, 1915;
The New England Silversmith, RISD 1965,
 cat. 279; *Gorham: Masterpieces in Metal*,
 RISD, 1983.

Condition:
 Restored at Gorham in August 1983 by
 Werner Leyh, through the generosity of
 Gorham/Textron.

Only in the context of competition for
 gold medals at world's fairs is it pos-
 sible to comprehend fully how the Art
 Nouveau lady's writing table and chair
 William C. Codman created for Gorham
 came into existence.¹ Made and signed
 (fig. a) in 1903, and originally *en suite*
 with a now lost seventeen-piece desk set
 in repoussé (fig. b), the pieces were ini-



Fig. 47a

tially intended for display in the Ameri-
 can section of the Department of Art at
 the St. Louis World's Fair of 1904.² Aside
 from 10,000 or more man-hours
 expended on the design and execution
 of the set, the table and chair incorpo-
 rated an incredible variety of materials,
 ranging from redwood, boxwood, thuya-
 wood, and ebony to ivory, mother-of-
 pearl, and tooled leather with gilt deco-
 ration. For sources of design, Codman
 drew inspiration from diverse cultures
 and historical traditions, including
 luxury furniture created by André-
 Charles Boulle in late 17th-century
 France, Rococo designs for furniture and
 decoration published by Thomas Chip-
 pendale in mid-18th-century England,
 and Art Nouveau objects in silver and
 ceramics designed by Félix Bracquemond
 in late 19th-century France. Codman also
 relied heavily on Hispano-Moorish
 design sources, especially for the sinuous
 floral inlays of daisies, morning glories
 and clematis which enhance the surfaces
 of the writing table. The floral theme
 extended to the silver gallery below the
 mirror with its poppies and an owl
 symbolizing night, while the decoration
 of the four legs included flowers emble-
 matic of the four seasons: the lily for
 spring; wild rose for summer; chrysan-
 themum for autumn; and pine cone for
 winter. For Codman's efforts, the lady's
 writing table, chair, and desk set won the
 grand prize at the World's Fair for beauty
 and excellence of craftsmanship in their
 particular field.

Before creating the St. Louis lady's

writing table and chair, Codman had
 designed and made a solid silver dressing
 table and stool as the centerpiece of
 Gorham's prize-winning display of Art
 Nouveau-inspired Martelé (or hand-
 hammered) silver at the Paris Exposition
 of 1900 (fig. c). Not surprisingly, the two
 sets of silver furniture had many design
 features in common, including attached
 mirrors, cabriole legs, and part ivory
 feet. Perhaps even more significant in
 Codman's career was an earlier suite of
 music-room furniture for the New York
 art collector Henry G. Marquand. While
 designed by the English artist Sir
 Lawrence Alma-Tadema, it was Codman
 who actually oversaw its execution
 between 1884 and 1886 in England,
 before he came to work as chief designer
 for Gorham in 1891.³ Like the RISD
 writing table and chair, the suite incorpo-
 rated a rich medley of materials and
 stylistic sources. Certain of the armchairs
 from the suite included swans' heads at
 the bases of their arms, and twenty years
 later similar swans' heads would appear
 in the same location on the RISD chair.⁴
 Indeed, no single experience could have
 better prepared Codman for the creation
 of great exhibition pieces on behalf of
 Gorham, culminating in the design of
 the St. Louis writing table and chair.

As Louis Comfort Tiffany was on the
 selection committee for applied arts at
 the St. Louis Fair, he would have been
 familiar with the lady's writing table and
 chair now at RISD, not to mention the
 earlier version in solid silver shown in
 Paris. In order not to let the great rival
 firm of Gorham have the last word, in
 1905 Tiffany created his own version of a
 silver dressing table, now at Maymont, a
 large house on the outskirts of Rich-
 mond, Virginia.⁵ In the name of "one-
 upmanship," he substituted not only the
 more exotic Celtic style, but also legs
 made out of silver-encrusted narwhal
 tusks, producing a highly original –
 although less aesthetically successful –
 composition (fig. d).



Fig. 47b
 Illustration of desk
 set which originally
 accompanied writing
 table, from booklet
 prepared for the
*Panama-Pacific Inter-
 national Exposition*,
 1915. (RISD Museum
 archives)

Despite Tiffany, Gorham felt sufficiently pleased with the lady's writing table and chair to let them speak again for the firm at the Panama-Pacific International Exposition in San Francisco in 1915. On that occasion Gorham produced a small illustrated booklet extolling the virtues of the pieces and suggesting to prospective purchasers with \$25,000 to spare that they "would make most beautiful and desirable adornments for milady's boudoir or library." The New York financier August Heckscher must have thought so as well, because he purchased them as a gift for his daughter, the Viscountess Esher, at which time the pieces went to live with her in England. Upon her death in the early 1950s, they came into the possession of the London antique dealers, Christy's of Kent, Ltd. (not to be confused with the auction house of a similar name). By then having fallen hopelessly out of fashion, largely because of the difficulty of maintaining such pieces in a servantless age, they were offered for sale by that firm at a fraction of their original cost. Undeterred by the thought of upkeep, especially as he intended to give them to the RISD Museum, Frederick Thurber, then president of the Providence jewelry store of Tilden-Thurber (and a descendant of John Gorham's partner, Gorham Thurber), arranged for them to come home after forty years in order to serve as a reminder of Gorham's "golden age."⁶

CPM

1. In a similar quest for a "show stopper" at the Crystal Palace Exhibition in New York in 1853, the German-trained cabinetmaker John Henry Belter produced a table which anticipated Codman's in its use of ebony, along with extensive detailing in ivory, including busts of Washington, Franklin, Jefferson and Pierce (Schwartz 1981, p. 73).
2. According to the official catalogue, they were exhibit no. 65.
3. For an early description, see J. Moyr Smith, *Ornamental Interiors* (London, 1887), pp. 95–96.
4. For an illustration of one of the arm-chairs now in the Victoria and Albert Museum, see Clive Wainwright, "A Neoclassical Chair," *Antiques*, v. 188 (September 1980), p. 450.
5. The dressing table is on view in the house, which is a public museum. Richard Cheek kindly brought it to the author's attention.
6. Frederick B. Thurber, *The Memoirs of an Ancient Mariner* (Providence, 1965), pp. 34–37.



Fig. 47c
Gorham dressing table and stool, 1900.
(Private collection)



Fig. 47d
Tiffany dressing table and chair, 1905.
(Maymont Foundation, Richmond)

SLAB TABLE, 1750–80

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Mahogany; Southern yellow pine, white oak, yellow-poplar. 29½ x 48 x 22½

Bequest of Charles L. Pendleton. 04.002

Publications:

Lockwood 1904, p. 17; Landman 1975, p. 926.

Condition:

The frame was refinished in 1946 on the recommendation of John Maxon. A large crack extends through both the upper and lower left side of the right front leg and foot. A diagonal wooden brace has been added to the front right corner beneath the top.

This marble slab table, together with its mate in the Bayou Bend Collection (Warren 1975, no. 114), probably stood against the piers between the windows of a Philadelphia drawing room or else were arranged symmetrically against the walls of a dining room. Their semi-circular fronts and serpentine ends suggest a location where they could be seen from both sides. The carved decoration on this and the Bayou Bend table are complementary in their asymmetry, providing further evidence of a balanced arrangement in their original setting. For example, the leaves on the legs of the RISD table curl inward, whereas they curl outward on the Bayou Bend table.

Compared to the high-relief carving found on most Philadelphia high-style furniture of this period, the incised decoration on the skirt is unusually shallow and has led experts over the years to doubt its authenticity.¹ It does relate, however, to the shallow carving along the lower edges of several other Philadelphia case pieces and seems to reflect a conscious reaction against the prevailing style of high-relief carving.² The design incorporates many elements of the international Rococo style, including asymmetrical shell, ruffles, and C-scrolls. The cartouches that rise above each leg consist of a scrolled border surrounding flowers on a trellis background, a popular motif of the English Rococo style, which sought to introduce picturesque aspects of nature into domestic furniture as well as architecture and landscape design.³ Similar cartouches with a trellis or diapered background adorn the turret ends on some of the most elaborate Philadelphia card tables, including a pair made for Gov. John Penn that are attributed to Affleck, and the Morris and Easby family card tables.⁴



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As on cat. 49, the gracefully scrolled and scalloped frame belies the massive understructure required to support the marble top.⁵ An inner frame of stout pine boards has been laminated to the inside of the mahogany rails. In addition, four dovetailed braces connect the front of the frame with the back rail, which is a single oak board. The marble slab is less colorful than that on the other slab table (cat. 49), and yet it fits a contemporary description by Peter Kalm of the locally quarried stone. In his travels through Pennsylvania in 1750, he noted that "this province... yields many kinds of marble, especially a white one, with pale gray, bluish spots, that is found in a quarry at the distance of a few English miles from Philadelphia and is very good for working, though it is not one of the finest kinds of marble. A quantity of this commodity is shipped to different parts of America."⁶

TSM

1. Joseph Downs considered this table to be of very poor quality in 1947 and suspected that old legs had been added to a "doctored up" frame (object files).
2. See, for example, *Antiques*, v. 105 (May 1974), p. 945; and *Antiques*, v. 108 (September 1975), p. 323.
3. John Hardy, "Rococo Furniture and Carving" in Michael Snodin, ed., *Rococo. Art and Design in Hogarth's England*. London: Victoria and Albert Museum, 1984, p. 155.
4. Hornor 1935, plates 234 (now at Colonial Williamsburg, acc. no. 1976–26) and 235. See also Warren 1975, no. 110.
5. For the construction of the frame, see Sack 1, p. 83.
6. Adolph B. Benson, ed., *The America of 1750. Peter Kalm's Travels in North America*, 2 vols. New York: Wilson-Erickson Inc., 1937, vol. 1, p. 46.

SLAB TABLE, 1760–80
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Mahogany; pine. 32 x 54 x 27
Bequest of Charles L. Pendleton. 04.008

Publications:

Lockwood 1904, p. 5; Landman 1975, p. 929; *Museum Handbook*, RISD, 1985, p. 316.

Exhibition:

New York Antique and Art Dealers Association, *Arts Treasures Exhibition*, Parke-Bernet Galleries, 1955.

Condition:

Cleaned on the recommendation of John Maxon in 1946. The marble top is badly cracked in the right rear corner. After an earlier repair, the entire slab was reset in a bed of Keene cement.

The earliest slab tables in this country had imported slate set into their tops, but these were fragile and soon replaced by tables with marble slabs. By the third quarter of the 18th century, marble slab tables were particularly popular in Newport, New York, and Philadelphia, where the most elaborate examples were made.¹ Large side tables with stone tops, the predecessors of cellaret sideboards with drawers and cupboards (see cat. 51), were commonly used as dining room furniture. Marble tops were ideally suited for serving tables, since hot dishes, braziers, spilled food or liquids would do them no harm. Philadelphia inventories contain numerous references to “side-board cloths,” suggesting that even beautifully figured marble tops such as this one were generally covered.² They also served as pier tables in drawing rooms, which frequently doubled as dining rooms, or along one wall of an entrance hallway.

Philadelphia price lists for cabinetwork refer to “frames for marble slabs.” The finished product, however, required the additional skills of a carver and a stone cutter. The Pendleton table, one of the most magnificent examples in the Rococo style, clearly reflects this division of labor. Whereas a cabinetmaker constructed and veneered the serpentine frame to support the slab, an independent carver was responsible for carving the legs and claw feet. The abrupt transition between the plain skirt and carved knees is proof of their separate endeavors. A stone cutter, working from drawings supplied by the cabinetmaker, shaped the locally quarried marble to match the contour of the base. Finally, the cabinetmaker



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assembled all the components and delivered the finished table to the customer.

In spite of the considerable size and weight of this table, it nevertheless appears to be light and delicate. The fiery grain of the mahogany veneer enhances the bold serpentine curves of the skirt and helps to break up its mass, while the profusion of scrolled acanthus leaves on the legs visually diminishes their actual bulk. The top itself, richly veined in shades of purple, gray, white, and yellow, is a notable specimen of the fine marbles quarried outside of Philadelphia in King of Prussia (see cat. 48).

Made in the era of the Grand Tour, when the English avidly collected samples of colorful antique marble for their associations with classical antiquity and the palaces of Italy, this table with its magnificent slab of native marble was probably an object of considerable pride. In 1775, for example, Mr. and Mrs. Ralph Izard of Charleston posed in Rome for a double portrait by John Singleton Copley and were portrayed next to an Italian slab table. Like the other trappings of the Grand Tour that surround them in the painting, the marble-top table suggests their passion for things antique and their knowledge of fashion-

able Italian furniture styles. Likewise, the owners of this table probably derived as much pleasure from it as amateur natural historians as they did from its associations with the Grand Tour.³

A smaller slab table at the Philadelphia Museum of Art is so similar to this table as to have been produced in the same shop or perhaps for the same family.⁴ The shaping of the skirt is less pronounced, but the carving on the legs and the unusual articulation of the talons on the feet are remarkably alike in every detail and appear to be by the same hand.

TSM

1. See Mabel Munson Swan, “American Slab Tables,” *Antiques*, v. 63 (January 1953), pp. 40–43. See also Heckscher 1985, p. 155; PMA 1976, cat. 115.
2. Hornor 1935, p. 136.
3. See Prown 1966, v. 2, fig. 342, and Jackson-Stops 1985, cat. 227.
4. PMA acc. no. 22–85–1, illustrated in Nutting 1928, no. 1067. Unfortunately neither table’s provenance is known.

PIER TABLE, 1818

Vose, Coates & Co. (1808–1818)

Boston, Massachusetts

Mahogany with mahogany veneer; pine.

35¾ x 49 x 22½

Abby Rockefeller Mauzé Fund. 82.014

Provenance:

Purchased in 1818 from Vose, Coates & Co. by John Davis Williams (1770–1848) of Roxbury, Massachusetts; by bequest in 1848 to his daughter, Mary Elizabeth Williams (Mrs. Giles H. Lodge); by bequest in 1905 to her son, Francis Giles Lodge; by bequest to his daughter, Mary Commory Lodge (1894–1981); sold December 16, 1981, at auction of estate of Mary C. Lodge at Lawton Gallery, Brattleboro, Vermont; acquired by John Walton, Inc., Jewett City, Connecticut, from whom purchased

Publication:

Museum Notes, RISD, 1983, p. 21.

Between 1800 and 1825 the names of three great cabinetmaking firms stand out in Boston: John and Thomas Seymour, Thomas Emmons and George Archibald, and Isaac Vose and Joshua Coates. The furniture produced by these firms was so highly regarded at the time that numerous advertisements for auctions of the contents of houses in and around Boston list their names beside the pieces they made.¹ Their furniture was likewise costly, as indicated by the Vose, Coates & Co. bill of 1818 (fig. a) accompanying this pier table, which was originally one of a pair, the present whereabouts of the other unknown. Although several items are listed, the pair of pier tables was the most expensive at \$280. In 1827 the comparable New York firm of Joseph Meeks charged John L. Larned of Providence \$120 for a pair of "Pier tables with marble pillars and slabs" (Ott 1969, p. 16).

Aside from establishing the cost and the name of the maker, the bill also shows that the original owner of the RISD pier table was John Davis Williams (1770–1848), a successful Boston wine merchant and importer who resided in then-fashionable Roxbury. As the house for which the table was purchased disappeared long ago to make way for the existing Cathedral, it is impossible to reconstruct its original context with any exactitude.² However, a pair of pier tables often suggests that they were meant to face one another at either end of a double parlor between a pair of windows. With matching mirrors hung over them, these tables in both their style



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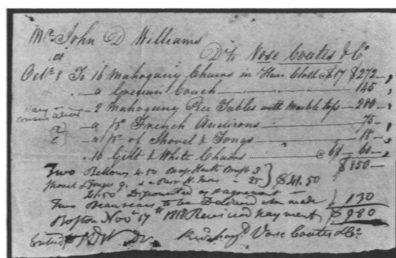


Fig. 50a

and arrangement were very much in the French Empire taste, similar pier tables and glasses having become fashionable in France around 1800. The bill for the Williams residence also lists "16 Mahogany Chairs in Hair Cloth at \$17, \$272," "A Grecian Couch, \$145," and a "pair of French Andirons, \$75," all of which conjures up a very handsomely furnished suite of rooms in the latest Neo-classical style.

As several labeled pier tables by Emmons & Archibald have survived, that firm obviously made a specialty of them (Talbot 1975, pp. 878–87). They share with the Vose & Coates pier table veneered columns with simple gilt brass collars for the capitals and bases, and a concave shelf at the base. More often than not, Emmons & Archibald tables sit on squat ball feet incorporating a gilt brass ring at the center, while RISD's table sits on cylinder feet. A virtually identical but undocumented pier table with the same feet and a white, rather than gray, marble top is on view at Gore Place in Waltham, Massachusetts. That table further suggests that the cylinder foot can be used to distinguish tables by Vose & Coates from those made by Emmons & Archibald. However, it is necessary to

proceed with caution when trying to define and differentiate the work of these two firms, because they were closely linked; Thomas Emmons even purchased the Vose firm in 1825, just before his death.³

The RISD pier table and presumably its mate were bequeathed by John Williams in 1848 to his daughter Mary Elizabeth, who by then had married Dr. Giles Lodge. Even before she inherited them, she was familiar with the work of both Vose and his rival Archibald, as noted in her diaries: "Mr. Vose brought up the sideboard and bureau also some other things..." (June 5, 1834); "Father made me a present of a Wardrobe made by Archibald" (April 25, 1844).⁴ Such references reveal the high regard in which both cabinetmakers were held by their fellow Bostonians, with the result that they shared many of the same patrons.

CPM

1. Jane Nylander, "Vose and Coates, Cabinetmakers," *Old-Time New England*, v. 64 (Winter-Spring 1974), pp. 87–91.
2. Information from N. David Scotti, Providence, Rhode Island.
3. Nylander, *op.cit.*, pp. 90–91. There is also a labeled Isaac Vose & Son dressing table, at the St. Louis Art Museum, which has the ball feet with brass inlay normally associated with tables labeled by Emmons & Archibald (Springer 1982, p. 1189).
4. The diaries of Mary Elizabeth Lodge and related family papers are still privately owned.

SIDEBOARD, 1790–1815

Baltimore, Maryland

Mahogany with mahogany veneer and light wood inlay; yellow-poplar, pine.

39½ x 72 x 27½

Bequest of Charles L. Pendleton. 04.060

Provenance:

Purchased in Baltimore, ca. 1885

Publications:

Lockwood 1904, pl. 48; Salomonsky

1931, pl. 64.

In the decades following the Revolutionary War, the city of Baltimore rapidly emerged as the country's third largest port, eclipsing Boston and rivaling Philadelphia and New York. Between 1790 and 1800, the city's population nearly doubled. Whereas only a few cabinetmakers had been working there before the 1780s, at least twenty-five were active by the 1790s, fifty in 1800, and seventy or more by 1810.¹ This surge in Baltimore's population and commercial activity was naturally accompanied by a boom in the construction of houses, an ideal market for fashionable cabinetwork such as this sideboard in the latest Neo-classical taste.

The introduction to America of the sideboard containing a cellaret drawer fitted for bottles and other drawers for flatware and table linens coincided with the gradual specialization of domestic room use. By the Federal period, new houses often included a separate room for dining. Traditional serving tables with marble tops remained a popular alter-

native, but by the time this sideboard was made, most well-to-do Americans probably would have agreed with George Hepplewhite's observation that "the great utility of this piece of furniture has procured it a very general reception; and the convenience it affords renders a dining-room incomplete without a sideboard."²

Federal-period inventories indicate that sideboards frequently stood in drawing rooms as well as in dining rooms and occasionally in both. The evidence indicates that the function of early 19th-century rooms remained flexible, depending upon the season and the formality of the occasion. Paintings of the period depict the sideboard's dual role as formal dining room furniture and as a staging area in rooms adjacent to drawing rooms.³ They were ideal for the conspicuous display of costly objects as well as for storage. Numerous observers of American customs remarked upon their hosts' proud display of knife boxes, silver, glass and ceramics on the sideboard. Robert Roberts, the butler at Gore Place in Waltham, Massachusetts, went so far as to recommend arranging glasses in a crescent so that a light placed behind them would achieve the "most sublime effect."⁴

Baltimore cabinetmakers excelled at making cellaret sideboards, a form first published by Hepplewhite in the 1780s and quickly adapted by cabinetmakers in all the major cabinetmaking centers on this side of the Atlantic. Sideboards of this shape with a similar configuration of one wide drawer over two cabinet doors, flanked by one or two large doors, appear to have been especially popular

in Baltimore, judging from the number of similar examples that have survived.⁵ However, those with four legs are much more common than those with six, as on this example. The fifth and sixth legs shift the emphasis away from the broadly curved ends and artfully constructed wrap-around doors to a more frontal design. The addition of two more legs also creates a plain panel at either end that would have made a sideboard more suitable for placement in a niche or in some other location that was frontal rather than exposed on three sides.

That local cabinetmakers frequently embellished door and drawer fronts with large inlaid ovals and circles is not surprising, considering the number of inlay-makers who worked in Baltimore and the quantities of inlay and stringing that they produced.⁶ As a result, the same patterned inlays on the legs of the RISD sideboard are found on other Baltimore case furniture and tables. For example, ovals set within satinwood with ovolo corners were a popular motif for legs and were available in several different sizes to suit the scale of the piece. Likewise, strings of ovals with inset mahogany diamonds were available in graduated sizes. Less common as ornament than inlaid bellflowers, they appear together with ovolo cartouches on a Baltimore card table whose design closely resembles this sideboard (Baltimore 1947, cat. 8).

TSM



1. Weidman 1984, p. 71.
2. Hepplewhite 1794, p. 3.
3. For inventories of Newport and Salem, see Garrett 1959, pp. 911–12, and Cooke 1980, pp. 150–51. See also Nylander 1982, pp. 1174, 1182.
4. Garrett 1984, pp. 915–16, and Roberts, *House Servant's Directory* (Boston, 1827), p. 49.
5. One with similar inlays but having four instead of six legs was sold at auction, AAA sale 4252 (April 18, 1936), lot 130. Other six-legged examples are illustrated in Sack 5, p. 114; Kirk 1971, p. 31; and AAA sale 4051 (October 13–14, 1933), lot 481. For related serpentine four-legged sideboards, see Baltimore 1947, no. 43; Sotheby's sale 4478Y (November 19–22, 1980), lot 1270; *Antiques*, v. 113 (June 1978), p. 1243; *Antiques*, v. 123 (June 1983), p. 1095; and Skinner's sale 1072 (January 3, 1986), lot 50.
6. See Weidman 1984, p. 73.

SIDEBOARD, 1790–1825
 Providence area, Rhode Island
 Mahogany, mahogany veneer; pine,
 chestnut. 41 x 45 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 22
 Bequest of Charles L. Pendleton. 04.056

Publications:

Lockwood 1904, pl. 56; Osburn and
 Osburn 1926, p. 19; Salomonsky 1931,
 pl. 65; Landman 1975, p. 935.

Condition:

The locks on the four drawers have been
 removed and the keyholes patched with
 veneer.

A dozen or more sideboards of this small
 size with similar arrangements of
 drawers and pictorial inlays are known.
 In addition, several others are of dif-
 ferent designs but related by the simi-
 larity of their stringing and inlays.¹ The
 entire group has been loosely attributed
 to Thomas Howard, largely on the basis
 of a pair of documented card tables with
 similar panels on their aprons outlined
 with stringing and with inlaid urns and
 bellflowers.² Howard (1774–1833) was
 an enterprising and successful cabinet-
 maker-turned-merchant who worked in
 Pawtuxet and nearby Providence
 between 1795 and 1827 before moving
 his business to Philadelphia and back
 again.³ Recent research has revealed that
 he was only the most visible and self-
 promoting member of an extensive com-
 munity of twelve or fifteen cabinet-
 makers, chairmakers, turners, lumber
 merchants, and other furniture-related
 craftsmen all working within a very small
 area around Pawtuxet Cove, between
 Cranston and Warwick.

Linked by intermarriage, apprentice-
 ships, business partnerships, property
 ownership, and sheer proximity that
 extended over more than one generation,
 members of this tightly knit group of
 craftsmen are probably responsible for
 many of the sideboards formerly ascribed
 to Howard alone. The number of these
 sideboards and the variation of their size,
 drawer arrangement, and use of inlays
 provide ample evidence of the work of
 several different but related craftsmen.
 It may be that Howard or his brother-in-
 law, Amasa Humphrey, both of whom
 had showrooms in Providence and shops
 in Pawtuxet, sold cabinetwork made
 by others.

Indeed, collaboration must have been
 difficult to avoid, considering that
 Howard's brother Joseph was a cabinet-
 maker and housewright, and his wife was
 the sister of Amasa Humphrey.⁴ One of
 Howard's sisters married the cabinet-

maker William Humphrey (brother of
 Amasa); another married the cabinet-
 maker Robert Niles. Meanwhile, Amasa
 Humphrey married the sister-in-law of
 the cabinetmaker Adrian Webb, Jr., one-
 time partner of Charles Scott, who was a
 cousin of Howard's assistant, Jeremiah
 Scott Short. Another of Howard's appren-
 tices, Samuel Waite Wightman, married
 the daughter of the cabinetmaker William
 Thornton, who was the brother-in-law
 of Adrian Webb.⁵ In this respect, the
 Pawtuxet school of cabinetmakers rep-
 resents a Federal-period counterpart to
 the complex dynasty of Goddards
 and Townsends working in Newport.
 Although the Pawtuxet school probably
 did revolve around Thomas Howard, it
 included many more craftsmen than is
 generally recognized. The work of indi-
 vidual craftsmen within the group is
 difficult to discern, and the activity of the
 group extended later into the 19th cen-
 tury than the appearance of their furni-
 ture might suggest.

Even by American standards, the
 design of this small, plain sideboard on
 tall, tapered legs is quite austere. Its
 similarity in height and overall plainness
 to Southern "hunt boards," and the
 similarity of its inlaid stringing to Balti-
 more sideboards (see cat. 51), raise the
 question of the influence of Southern
 furniture on Rhode Island cabinet-
 makers. Given the quantities of goods,
 from textiles to race horses, that were
 shipped from Rhode Island to Virginia
 and Carolina ports, the seasonal work of
 Providence and Newport architects in
 Charleston and Savannah, and the fact
 that Joseph Rawson went so far as to
 establish a branch of his Providence
 cabinetmaking business in Charleston,
 the stylistic affinities between this side-
 board and Southern furniture are not
 surprising.⁶

At the same time, the distinctive vine
 inlays on Providence furniture sug-
 gest other stylistic links with eastern
 Massachusetts, notably a group of card



tables attributed to Jacob Forster of Charlestown, although a more visually compelling connection exists with a group of case pieces related to the Webb and Scott labeled desk and bookcase and often attributed to the Hartford area, whose true origins have not yet been fully established.⁷ The fact that most of the crossed vine inlays on these sideboards and card tables differ from each other in small details suggests that they were probably made by Providence-area cabinetmakers in their own shops rather than by a specialist inlay-maker. One would expect to find less variation, as with other urban-made furniture, if the Pawtuxet and Providence cabinetmakers had been buying inlay from the same source.

TSM

1. Other related sideboards are at the Rhode Island Historical Society (Ott 1965, no. 48); Colonial Williamsburg (Greenlaw 1974, no. 111); the Garvan Collection at Yale (1930.2171 and .2172); and illustrated in Nutting 1928, no. 758; Sack 2, p. 408; William Whiting Nolen collection (Anderson Galleries sale 1813 [March 6–8, 1924], lot 321); Nathan Cushing collection (Henry W. Cooke, Providence, auctioneer [June 15, 1934], lot 89); Sotheby's sale 4692v (September 26, 1981), lot 424 (ex coll. Marsden J. Perry); Sotheby's sale 5208 (June 28–30, 1984), lot 702; and in *Antiques*, v. 18 (August 1930), p. 159; and *Antiques*, v. 111 (April 1977), back cover.
2. Hewitt 1982, cat. 33.
3. The most complete biography of Howard appears in Eleanore B. Monahan, "Providence Cabinetmakers," *Rhode Island History*, v. 23 (January 1964), pp. 1–22.
4. There is conflicting evidence in the documents that obscures the relationship between Thomas and Joseph Howard. Some sources indicate that Joseph was Thomas's brother, others his cousin, and some his son. It seems most likely that he was Thomas's brother and business partner, since they were involved together in real estate transactions, and Joseph consistently followed Thomas as his business moved.
5. The author wishes to express his gratitude to Sara Steiner, who made available her extensive research notes on the Pawtuxet circle of furniture craftsmen.

6. For a biography of Rawson, see Monahan 1980. Links between Rhode Island architects and the South are discussed in Jordy and Monkhouse 1982, p. 193. For the early export of Narragansett Pacers to the South and a standing horse race between North and South, see Wilkins Updike, *History of the Episcopal Church in Narragansett, Rhode Island* (New York: Henry M. Onderdonk, 1847), pp. 514–15.
7. See Fales 1976, no. 285; Montgomery 1966, nos. 177, 287; and for Webb & Scott, see Robert P. Emlen and Sara Steiner, "The Short-lived Partnership of Adrian Webb and Charles Scott," *Antiques*, v. 127 (May 1985), pp. 1141–43.

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SIDEBOARD, 1810–25

New York City

Mahogany, mahogany veneers; pine.

59¾ x 61⅜ x 22¼

Bequest of Arthur and Martha Lisle, by exchange. 71.078

Provenance:

Mr. and Mrs. Allan B.A. Bradley, New York (before 1929); Israel Sack, Inc., New York, from whom purchased

Exhibition:

Loan Exhibition of Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Century Furniture and Glass... for the Benefit of the National Council of Girl Scouts, New York, 1929, cat. 786.

Publications:

Antiques, v. 16 (November 1929), p. 366;

McClelland 1939, p. 172, pl. 154;

Antiques, v. 37 (June 1940), p. 297.

Beginning with its exhibition at the celebrated *Girl Scouts Loan Exhibition of 1929*, this sideboard has long been attributed to Duncan Phyfe (1768–1854), a Scottish-born cabinetmaker who began working in New York City around 1792 and whose name has become synonymous with American furniture in the English Regency style. In the 1929 exhibition, this sideboard presided over a gallery of tables, chairs, and settees, "a comprehensive collection of authentic specimens from the shop of... Duncan Phyfe."¹ Although comparatively little case furniture by Phyfe is known even today, several aspects of this and a few related sideboards were thought to be tantamount to his signature. In particular, critics noted as "revelations of authorship" the dramatically figured mahogany veneers, reeding on the base molding and in the pediment, and carved water leaves. However, even at the height of the enthusiasm for Phyfe's furniture in the 1920s, some writers drew attention to the mechanical quality of such carvings and hinted at the decline of craftsmanship since the mid-18th century.²

In the half century since the *Girl Scouts Loan Exhibition*, the names of several other skilled cabinetmakers have emerged who were working in New York City at the same time as Phyfe and whose labeled work is virtually indistinguishable from his or that of his workshop. A labeled sideboard by Charles-Honoré Lannuier at the Metropolitan Museum (1972.235.1), for example, also incorporates columns, carved water leaves, lion's head drawer pulls, and pineapple finials on the splashboard. The similarity



of the pineapple finials to those on other sideboards and tables suggests the work of a specialist carver who furnished finials as well as carved feathers, like those above the feet on this sideboard, to several local cabinetmakers. Phyfe's nephew, James Phyfe, was one of probably several carvers who worked for his uncle.³

Supporting the attribution of this piece to Phyfe's workshop are several unusual details that relate to details on some of his documented work. For example, the engaged colonettes at either end of the splashboard recall the elegant pair of columns on the footboard of a bedstead Phyfe made on the occasion of his daughter Elizabeth's wedding prior to 1820. The seemingly old-fashioned pitch pediment also recalls Phyfe's unusual design for a desk and bookcase with a broken scroll pediment made at about the same time.⁴

Compared to the preceding sideboard from the Federal period, made for a rapidly expanding housing market in Baltimore, this sideboard embodies the well-established mercantile prosperity of lower Manhattan in the 1820s. Drawn by New York's prosperity after the War of 1812, many European furniture craftsmen immigrated to this country and brought with them the latest fashions from Regency England and Napoleonic France. Cabinetmakers introduced more massive furniture designs that drew upon a classical vocabulary that was more archaeologically correct and combined both Egyptian and Greek motifs.

The development of more sophisti-

cated power saws allowed cabinetmakers in the first decades of the 19th century to create spectacular veneered surfaces, as on this piece. As mahogany cross-banding began to take the place of stringing and inlays in light, contrasting colors, case furniture began to appear even more massive. At the same time, dining rooms became standard features in wealthy households. Their furnishings were intended to convey the permanence of antiquity rather than the delicacy of Neo-classicism. The carved pineapples on this sideboard, for example, are tangible depictions of food as well as traditional symbols of hospitality, unlike the pictorial inlays on the Baltimore dining table (cat. 67a) that illustrate more abstract themes of liberty and patriotism. TSM

1. *Antiques*, v. 16 (November 1929), p. 366. See also Cooper 1980, p. 12, fig. 10.
2. *Antiques*, v. 2 (November 1922), pp. 203–4. For related examples, see MMA 1970, cat. 18; *Antiques*, v. 114 (June 1981), p. 1262; Sotheby's sale 5001 (January 27, 29, 1983), lot 300; Christie's sale 5734 (October 13, 1984), lot 228b.
3. See McClelland 1939, pp. 106, 173. For James Phyfe and other members of Phyfe's family whom he employed in his shop, see Michael K. Brown, "Duncan Phyfe," M.A. Thesis, University of Delaware, 1978, p. 11.
4. Cooper 1980, p. 21.

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DRAWING-ROOM CABINET, ca. 1866
Alexander Roux (ca. 1813–1886)
New York City (b. France)

Rosewood, rosewood veneer, ebonized trim, marquetry of various woods; soft maple veneer, yellow-poplar. 44 x 51½ x 19
Jesse H. Metcalf Fund. 78.052

Provenance:

Unidentified house on Bellevue Avenue, Newport, Rhode Island; McDonough & Larner, Newport, Rhode Island, from whom purchased

Publications:

Monkhouse 1980, p. 131; *Museum Notes*, RISD, 1980, p. 14; *Museum Handbook*, RISD, 1985, p. 325.

Condition:

Restored in 1979 at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, under the supervision of Vincent Cerbone. Missing veneer and metal mounts were replaced and the entire surface French polished.

The importance of the French cabinet-making firm responsible for making this drawing-room cabinet was noted as early as 1850 by the tastemaker Andrew Jackson Downing in his influential book *The Architecture of Country Houses*: "In New York, the rarest and most elaborate designs, especially for drawing-room and library use, are to be found at the warehouse of Roux, in Broadway." Elsewhere in the same volume Downing extended further praise to the firm of Alexander Roux when he stated that he thought its "large collection of furniture for the drawing-room, library, etc.—the most tasteful designs of Louis Quatorze, Renaissance, Gothic, etc., to be found in the country."¹

Although approximately sixteen years separate Downing's comments from the RISD cabinet, there is no indication that Roux's premier role in the New York cabinetmaking world had diminished. As early as 1855, Roux was employing 120 people, and at the height of the firm's success in the 1870s, he was making a profit of \$250,000 to \$550,000 annually.² In supporting such a large operation, as well as making it so profitable, Roux obviously knew how to capitalize on his French background and Parisian training, which gave his firm an aura of sophistication that appealed to his upper-class clientele. He also knew how to flatter each of his clients into believing that nobody mattered more to him than they did, and that the pieces he created for them were unique. He was able to



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achieve the latter illusion with a modest outlay of time and expense by employing interchangeable parts, which in turn allowed him to enhance the profits of Roux and Co. Perhaps no single piece of furniture better demonstrates Roux's strategy for dealing with his clients than that monument to "conspicuous consumption," the drawing-room cabinet, especially when serving as a base for a bronze sculpture.

In view of the fact that drawing-room cabinets were among the most expensive pieces of furniture produced, Roux made them in at least three different sizes to suit different pocketbooks. As examples of all three sizes are available for comparison in public collections, RISD's cabinet can be seen to have much in common with the others, including elaborate panels of floral marquetry, ornately cast gilt brass mounts, and oval decorated "Sèvres" porcelain plaques, all of which would have been described as in the style of Louis XVI. But in keeping with the eclecticism of the day, this ornament has then been applied to cases in the Renaissance Revival mode, with



Fig. 54a
Cabinetmaker's label on back of cabinet.

more than a hint of *néo-grec*, characterized by heavy proportions, deeply incised lines, contrasting veneers, and angular profiles. Although each cabinet employed the same vocabulary of design elements, Roux then altered the syntax to suit an individual client's need, and above all to make the client think he owned something unique.

As the RISD cabinet has only one door, and a thin rosewood-veneered board for a plinth on the top, it would rank as the smallest, and hence least expensive of the examples under consideration. By enlarging the plinth to form an Ionic

capital, and doubling the number of doors, as in the examples at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (MMA 1970, pl. 164) and the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts (Mooz and Weekley 1978, p. 1061), Roux produced a medium-sized cabinet, and priced it accordingly. However, when he retained the Ionic capital for a plinth, but tripled the number of doors, as in the example at the Margaret Woodbury Strong Museum in Rochester (Fitzgerald 1982, p. 232), Roux produced a truly prodigious and costly piece of furniture, even by his standards. Yet, as already noted, the decorative elements incorporated into the design of the latter are virtually identical to those found in the RISD cabinet.

Even though Roux made a specialty of the drawing-room cabinet, and more documented examples from his shop seem to have survived than from any other, the impression should not be given that he enjoyed a monopoly. Examples were made abroad and are often very difficult to differentiate from their American counterparts, giving credence to the idea that Roux and other cabinetmakers on this side of the Atlantic imported many of the decorative components which they then assembled in their shops. In America, cabinets similar to Roux's were made just about anywhere French cabinetmakers happened to be working between the late 1850s and the early 1870s. Documented examples are found as far north as Salem, Massachusetts, from the shop of Israel Fellows, where the French cabinetmaker John Droitt was employed (Essex Institute 1980, p. 49), and as far south as Baltimore, Maryland, from the shop of Thomas Godey (High Museum; see Hanks and Peirce 1983, p. 31). There is no question that New York City, with its concentration of French-trained craftsmen, did produce more drawing-room cabinets during this period than any other American city, and aside from Roux, documented examples of comparable quality have survived by Leon Marcotte (Newark Museum; see Dietz 1983, p. 36), Kimbel & Cabus (Brooklyn Museum; see Peirce 1979, p. 1000), and Pottier & Stymus. A drawing-room cabinet made by the latter firm has the singular distinction, of all those cited here, of still being in the house for which it was originally made, the Gov. Henry Lippitt house in Providence (1863–65).³ It is worth examining in more detail, especially as it has much in common with the RISD cabinet by Roux.

Pottier & Stymus's original bill for the Lippitt cabinet not only reveals that it was

made in 1865, but also that it was the second most costly piece of furniture in the drawing room, surpassed only by an ebony and gilt étagère with a mirror. The latter cost \$490, and the cabinet cost \$325. As its only significant difference from the Roux cabinet is a bronze (rather than porcelain) plaque attached to its single door, this price may approximate what Roux charged for the RISD cabinet, especially since it can also be dated to the mid-1860s based on the many details it shares with the Roux cabinet at the Metropolitan Museum, which has been firmly dated 1866. Additionally, Pottier & Stymus in their bill referred to it as a "Bronze Cabinet," leaving no question that they viewed it as a support for bronze sculpture. Taken together, the cabinet with its bronze sculpture would have provided the drawing room with its focal point, thus serving as a secular altar for the worship of culture.

CPM

1. Downing 1850, pp. 412, 432.
2. Dianne H. Hauserman, "Alexander Roux and his 'Plain and Artistic Furniture,'" *Antiques*, v. 93 (February 1968), pp. 210–17.
3. Cogswell 1982, pp. 222–25.

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CABINET, 1875–80
Possibly New York City
Ebonized cherry with incised gilt decoration. 73¾ x 44 x 21¾
Abby Rockefeller Mauzé Fund. 81.010

Provenance:

Stephen Lapidus Antiques, Hallowell, Maine, from whom purchased

Exhibition:

Chateau-sur-Mer, Preservation Society of Newport County, Rhode Island, 1983–85.

Although a rather compact piece of furniture, this cabinet gives the impression of being much larger through its use of architectural details, such as the Gothic crocketed pediment and cusped arches, and the néo-grec brackets and incised angular decoration on the posts, panels, doors, and drawers.¹ Charles Eastlake through his *Hints on Household Taste* (London, 1868) can be given credit for the dominant Gothic appearance of the cabinet and its use of strap hinges, while Christopher Dresser through his *Principles of Decorative Design* (London,

1873) can be given credit for its surface decoration. The use of ebonized wood owes a debt to the English designers in the circle of William Morris who first started to use it in their furniture in the 1850s while under the influence of *Japonisme*.²

In America the firm of cabinetmakers best known for the manufacture of ebonized Gothic furniture was Kimbel & Cabus of New York City.³ That they made a specialty of this type of furniture became readily apparent after their display of it at the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition in 1876. They also produced trade catalogues with photographic illustrations of actual pieces, of which a rare survival is in the library of the Cooper-Hewitt Museum in New York. While the RISD cabinet bears comparison in a general way with the pieces illustrated in the catalogue, there is no direct correspondence between the two. Furthermore, Kimbel & Cabus more often than not incorporated English ceramic tiles into their case furniture, while RISD's cabinet makes use of incised wooden panels, including those in the lower cupboard doors with their distinctive design of jaguar-like animals whose linear appearance is reminiscent of Oriental prints and embroideries. Even so, the close similarities suggest that the unknown designer of the RISD cabinet knew the work of Kimbel & Cabus, just as he had ready access to the publications of Eastlake and Dresser.

With the flotsam and jetsam of the Grand Tour displayed on the shelves of the RISD cabinet, it would have functioned in much the same way as the Roux cabinet (cat. 54). But without an early provenance, its specific role and context must be left to conjecture.

CPM

1. For discussion of néo-grec design, see Kenneth L. Ames, "What is the Néo-Grec?" *Nineteenth Century*, v. 2 (Summer 1976), pp. 13–21; and Kenneth L. Ames, "Sitting in (Néo-Grec) Style," *Nineteenth Century*, v. 2 (Autumn 1976), pp. 50–58.
2. J. Mordaunt Crook, "Two Pieces of Painted Furniture by William Burges," *Morris and Company 1861–1939*, Charlotte Gere, ed. (London: The Fine Arts Society, Ltd.), 1979, pp. 12–16.
3. David Hanks, "Kimbel & Cabus, 19th-Century New York Cabinet-makers," *Art & Antiques*, v. 3 (September/October 1980), pp. 44–53.

56

FOLIO CABINET, ca. 1880

Probably Providence, Rhode Island
Ebonized cherry with incised gilt decoration. 50⅓ x 51½ x 24
Gift of Alice C. Taft, Marianna F. Taft, Hope Smith and Brockholst M. Smith in memory of the Hon. Royal C. Taft. 45.188

Provenance:

Probably commissioned by the Hon. Royal C. Taft (1823–1912); to his sons Royal C. Taft, Jr. and Robert W. Taft; to their wives and children, the donors

Condition:

Two small brackets from the gallery appear to be missing.

The scale of this massive cabinet is such that it could house a folding double bed. The comparison is an apt one, because similar-looking cabinets were made for that very purpose, including one manufactured by the Acme Bed Co. and retailed in Providence by Clemens Bros. (fig. a).¹ However, when the flap of the RISD cabinet was folded down, it did not reveal bedding, but rather a collection of etchings and engravings assembled by the Providence print collector, Royal C. Taft, who also served as governor of Rhode Island and president of the Rhode Island School of Design.

The significance of Taft as a collector of works of art on paper was in no way exaggerated by the size of his folio cabinet. According to his obituary published in *The Proceedings of the Rhode Island Historical Society, 1911–1913*, "he had a cultivated taste for the fine arts, and made a collection of engravings and etchings."² In fact, his collection was considered important enough by 1890 to warrant a special exhibition of eighty-one engravings from it at the Rhode Island School of Design, and also a catalogue with technical notes on states and proofs, presumably prepared by Taft himself.³ The only piece of furniture then on the market for housing prints consisted of a drawing-room easel with a fold-out flap or pocket in wood attached to its base, which would have proved woefully inadequate for Taft's collection.⁴ He therefore had no choice but to commission the folio cabinet now at RISD. Fortunately the local cabinetmaking firm of Potter & Co. seemed quite able to fulfill the needs of local collectors and artists. Henry Steere turned to them in the 1870s and 1880s for elaborate bases for his bronzes (cat. 57), while Sydney Burleigh did the same in 1900 for chests

to incorporate his panel paintings and Julia Lippitt Mauran's wood carvings (cats. 5, 6). In view of this pattern of similar commissions, it would seem more than likely that Taft turned to Potter & Co. as well.

In the cabinet's construction, the use of ebonized cherry acknowledged the prevailing taste for Oriental decoration, while the gallery of diminutive spindles along the top took its inspiration from the Queen Anne style. The overall angular profile of the cabinet and the strong emphasis on its post-and-panel construction reflected the theories of Charles Eastlake as published in his highly influential *Hints on Household Taste* (London, 1868). Eastlake would also have approved of the incised decoration to the extent that it avoided any suggestion of perspective. Reminiscent of contemporary needlework embroidery, the decoration owed a great debt to the Royal School of Art Needlework display at the 1876 Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia.⁵ As for the subject matter of the decoration, the choice of flowers may well have been Taft's, because according to his

obituary he not only had a cultivated taste for the fine arts, but "the same taste led him to successful cultivation of orchids and other rare plants."⁶ CPM

1. The Clemens Bros. trade card illustrating such a bed is in the Joseph Downs Manuscript Collection in the library of the Winterthur Museum. Also see Eleanor Alexander, "'And a Bed Is Yon Seeming Bookcase': An Interpretation of Deception Beds in Victorian Homes," *Journal of American Culture*, v. 8 (Fall 1985), pp. 2–10.
2. "Necrology," *The Proceedings of the Rhode Island Historical Society*, 1911–1913, p. 65.
3. *Exhibition of Engravings from the Collection of Royal C. Taft, Esq.*, RISD, 1890.
4. For an example, see Fitzgerald 1982, p. 235.
5. Candace Wheeler, *Yesterdays in a Busy Life* (New York and London: Harper & Bros., 1918), p. 211.
6. "Necrology," *op. cit.*, p. 65.



Fig. 56a
Courtesy Henry Francis du Pont
Winterthur Museum, Joseph Downs
Manuscript Collection



55



56

PEDESTAL, ca. 1870

Probably New York, possibly Providence
Ebonized cherry with incised polychrome
decoration. 42½ x 14 (diam.)

S85.204

"Where shall we find a good pedestal?" asked Clarence Cook in 1878 in *The House Beautiful*.¹ Cook brought up the problem again in that volume, commenting on one he illustrated:

The pedestal in the corner is an ingenious provision for a much-felt need, — a pedestal for a statue, vase, or cast, being one of the pieces of furniture most difficult to find.²

Given the great vogue for collecting table sculpture after the Civil War, unparalleled in fact since the Renaissance, the want of pedestals noted by Cook is surprising. The middle classes would have needed them for their plaster groups by John Rogers, while the upper classes had to accommodate their bronze "trophy" from the latest Grand Tour. Perhaps pedestals fell into the category of "special orders," with each one tailored to fit a particular sculpture, and hence were not available for purchase off the floor of a furniture showroom.

Even though the RISD pedestal comes without a history, a similar pedestal can be seen in the Gov. Henry Lippitt house in Providence, whose furnishings were largely acquired in New York and Providence at the end of the 1860s.³ Both pedestals have in common angular silhouettes, ebonized surfaces, and incised decoration which are characteristic of furniture design in general around 1870. The decoration on the RISD pedestal is further enhanced by red, green, and gold paint, bringing to mind the colored lithographic plates which accompany Owen Jones's *Grammar of Ornament*. While that inexhaustible source of decorative motifs first appeared in 1856 in a folio-size edition, its full impact began to be felt only after it was reissued in 1868 in a less expensive format, which would suggest a similar date for the Museum's pedestal.

Although it is likely that both the RISD and Lippitt pedestals were made in New York, the growing demand for bases from local Providence collectors behooved the city's then most prominent cabinet-making firm, Potter & Co., to fill the need. That they did is confirmed by the 1890 auction sale catalogue of Henry J. Steere's art collection, where the descriptions of the bronzes are nearly eclipsed

by those for their accompanying pedestals.⁴ For example, A.J. Leduc's *Falconer* of 1872 came "with Pedestal of solid rosewood, designed especially for the bronze; richly carved and polished, of most substantial and elegant workmanship. Made by Messrs. Potter & Co., Providence, at a cost of \$400."⁵

CPM

1. Clarence Cook, *The House Beautiful* (New York, 1878), p. 231.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 107.
3. Cogswell 1982, pp. 203–42. The Lippitt pedestal is not mentioned among the surviving bills which document the furnishing of that house.
4. Col. William Goddard would have been one of these collectors, and a pedestal for one of his bronzes was donated to the RISD Museum by his daughter, Mrs. C. Oliver Iselin, in 1942.
5. F.J. Sheldon (auctioneer), *The Art Collection of the Late Henry J. Steere*, Providence, December 9–10, 1890, p. 56. Out of sixteen bronze sculptures, six were described as having pedestals especially designed for them by Potter & Co.



57

JOINED TABLE WITH DRAWER, ca. 1700
Attributed to Stephen Jaques

(1661–1744)

Newbury, Massachusetts

Oak, pine. 26 x 50¼ x 26½

Gift of the Museum Associates. 69.201

Provenance:

George Considine, North Dartmouth, Massachusetts; sold in 1969 to Roger Bacon, Brentwood, New Hampshire, from whom purchased

Publication:

Kirk 1982, pp. 144–45, no. 372.

Condition:

The top is probably an early replacement.

This table relates to a group of 17th-century Massachusetts joined tables referred to originally as "square" or "great" tables, some of which served as communion tables in Puritan meeting-houses, others as domestic furniture.¹ Two of the best-preserved examples (Historical Society of Old Newbury and Wadsworth Atheneum) retain their original tops made of heavy oak boards held together with cleats and secured to their

bases with wooden pins in each corner post. It is likely that the top of this table was originally attached in the same manner, since all four posts extend above the tops of the adjoining rails. The present pine top is probably an old replacement. Not only is its soft wood in better condition than the more durable oak frame beneath it, but the tops of the four corner posts show signs of wear that must have occurred before the present top was in place.

Although often referred to in probate records as square tables, most were in fact rectangular, perhaps in order to retain the all-important hierarchical axis at the head.² In keeping with their usual function as free-standing furniture, whether as communion or as parlor tables, their ornamental brackets and turned drops are often repeated on all four sides. This table with a drawer, on the other hand, was probably intended to be placed against a wall, since its sides and back lack any embellishment except for the shallow molding along the top edge of the stretchers. Like other contemporary tables with a single drawer, it probably served as a writing table.³

Collectors have traditionally referred to tables of this kind and size as "tavern" tables, ironically one of the few descriptive terms that is never mentioned in inventories of the period. Inventories provide unfortunately little help to

historians trying to match the many 17th-century references to tables with the surviving examples. Though most often described simply as a "table," some are further qualified as a "small" or even "a little joyned table."⁴

This table is attributed to Stephen Jaques of Newbury because of the similarity of its turnings and construction to a documented joint stool and a joined square table.⁵ Jaques, the son of a carpenter, was probably working by 1680 and in 1690 built the meetinghouse of the First Society in Newbury, for which he also made the square table. The legs of the joint stool, the joined table, and this table all have similar straight-sided balusters decorated with an incised ring below a pronounced collar. The turned feet of the RISD table resemble those on the Jaques joint stool but not the more complex feet on the larger table. The configuration of cyma curves sawn out on the skirt also differs slightly from the other table's, and there is no evidence that this table ever had turned drops.

Nevertheless, all three are constructed in the same manner, with the upper rails pinned twice and the stretchers pinned once. The drawer of this table hangs on runners attached to the sides of the frame. The drawer front is rabbeted to receive the bottom, and the drawer sides are fastened to the front by a single large dovetail, a construction detail that is often found on contemporary Boston

products but atypical of Essex County joinery. As one of the few pieces of furniture attributed to Jaques with a drawer, this table thus emerges as a third form he is known to have produced.⁶ It provides further evidence of the consistency of turned ornament within a single craftsman's output and confirms the use of dovetailed drawer construction in Newbury in the 17th century.

TSM

1. Other joined square tables are in the Wadsworth Atheneum (Nutting 1928, no. 824); the Historical Society of Old Newbury (Fairbanks and Trent 1982, no. 177); The Metropolitan Museum (Nutting 1928, nos. 835, 877); and the Milwaukee Art Museum (Nutting 1928, no. 832). For a discussion of domestic tables as communion furniture, see Benes and Zimmerman 1979, pp. 73–75.
2. Fairbanks and Trent 1982, no. 177.
3. See Hartford 1985, no. 73.
4. Cummings 1964, pp. 5, 32; Jobe and Kaye 1984, no. 56.
5. Fairbanks and Trent 1982, nos. 176–177. Other furniture attributed to Jaques is discussed in Benes 1986, nos. 14–15.
6. A similar table with drawer in the Nutting Collection at the Wadsworth Atheneum (1926.478a) is also attributed to Jaques.



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DROP-LEAF TABLE, 1700–35
West Newbury area, Massachusetts
Maple. 28½ x 53¾ x 47½
Furniture Exchange Fund. 69.061

Provenance:

According to tradition, this table had always stood in the Lydia Poore house, West Newbury, Massachusetts; sold at auction in 1968 (Merle Straw, auctioneer, Seabrook, New Hampshire) to Roger Bacon, Brentwood, New Hampshire, from whom purchased

Publications:

Museum Notes, RISD, v. 56 (May 1970), p. 14; *Antiques*, v. 100 (July 1971), p. 74; Landman 1975, p. 929; Kirk 1980, p. 145, fig. 373.

Condition:

Leaves badly warped and worn. Inner face of one foot is missing. Traces remain of the original red-brown paint.

The hinged brackets that rotate to support the leaves of this table were a less complicated alternative to the turned and joined legs on the following drop-

leaf tables. Both designs performed the same function, although a shaped bracket pivoting at the midpoint of the stretchers required less skill to assemble. Their shape also allows a larger number of sitters to draw closer to the table than the more cumbersome “gate” legs, which act as a barrier between sitters on either side. The so-called butterfly support was commonly used on smaller drop-leaf tables. This rectangular table, on the other hand, is an exceptionally large example of its kind.

Whereas the next two tables reflect the availability of interchangeable turned parts in urban workshops that produced hundreds of such tables, this table may represent the work of a non-specialist rural craftsman. Double baluster and ring turnings were the most common pattern for chair and table legs in the early 18th century. The turner intentionally softened the edges of these turnings, a style that is also seen on New England chairs (cat. 89) generally considered later products than chairs with more robust turnings. Like the legs on the tripod base table (cat. 60), these splay at an unusually wide angle, affording greater support for the large top.



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According to tradition, this table formed part of the furnishings of the Lydia Poore house in West Newbury, Massachusetts. Her ancestor Samuel Poore had been one of the earliest residents of Newbury. It is not known whether the table had descended in the Poore family, best remembered today for another ancestor, Ben: Perley Poore (1820–1887), one of the earliest collectors of Americana.¹ The table was originally stained a red-brown color, portions of which survive. In more recent years, the table stood exposed on the porch, its top reportedly piled high with newspapers, which may account for some of the warping and decay of its top and leaves.

TSM

1. John J. Currier, *Old Newbury: Historical and Biographical Sketches* (Boston: Damrell and Upham, 1896), pp. 349–50. See also Stillinger 1980, pp. 27–34; Saunders 1976, pp. 998–99.

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TABLE, 1700–35
Probably Pennsylvania
Maple, pine. 27½ x 38 (diam.)
Furniture Exchange Fund. 71.166

Provenance:

Hollis French (1868–1940), Boston, Massachusetts; descent unknown; to Roger Bacon, Brentwood, New Hampshire, from whom purchased

Condition:

Original square pegs join the top to the base. Old but not original nails fasten the top to blocks underneath. Portions remain of the original red stain.

Large round tables with triangular bases are less common today than tables with rectangular bases, perhaps because they were always slightly less stable, or because the tops proved to be too fragile when they extended so far beyond the frame. Though frequently called “tavern” tables by collectors, there is no documentary evidence for this term. They were probably used in any room of a house, as well as in public places. Unlike drop-leaf tables (cats. 61, 62), however, this table could not be easily stowed away when not in use. The splits in the top boards and the addition of makeshift cleats underneath indicate that it was not even easily picked up.

DROP-LEAF TABLE, 1710–40
 Massachusetts, probably Essex County
 Cherry, birch; Eastern white pine.
 25 x 29½ x 6½ (closed); 29½ (open)
 Gift of the Estate of Mrs. Gustav Radeke.
 31.559

Provenance:

Thomas Hale, Pigeon Cove, Massachusetts (1822–1896); descent unknown to Arthur Leslie Green, Newport, Rhode Island, from whom purchased by the donor in 1919 for \$400

Publication:

Osburn and Osburn 1926, p. 29.

Condition:

Top center may be an early replacement. Modern strap hinges removed from one leaf in 1971. Surface lightly cleaned. Traces of old red paint on edge of top. Pencil inscriptions on the frame read: "Thomas Hale/Pigeo[n] Cove 1822" and on underside of top: "T. Hale/Pigeon Cove/1822."

It would be difficult to conceive of a more compact furniture form than this circular drop-leaf table on a turned base. More than any of the other early furniture in this catalogue, it represents the need for portable, flexible furniture in early homes, in which large families used a small number of rooms for a great number of purposes throughout the day.

The vase, ball, and ring turnings on the base of this table resemble the turnings on the large oval table (cat. 62) and relate to the turned work on other Massachusetts chairs and tables. As with larger tables, the two hinged legs swing out perpendicular to the base to support the leaves. When closed, both legs conform with the plane of the base stretcher and create a pleasing symmetrical screen of paired turnings. The table then becomes a mere six and one half inches deep, stabilized by trestle feet at either end. Often the construction of such small tables was more sturdy than elegant, as horizontal planks were added between the legs for greater stability.¹

In its opened position, the trestle base and hinged legs must have created obstacles for sitters trying to draw close to this table. Large and small tables alike were probably covered with a cloth when in use and probably served in several capacities, from writing surface to dining table.

The inscriptions on the underside indicate that this table was owned in the early 19th century by Thomas Hale



Nevertheless, this table is a particularly fine example of a relatively rare form. The ogee balusters and reel and ball turnings are well articulated and crisply turned. The wide splay of the base provides a sturdy support for the large round top, which consists of three pine boards pegged into the tops of the legs and held together by a single cleat that has been let into the top of the frame. The stretchers and rails of the frame are also made of pine and their outer edges are ornamented with a simple molding, a refined treatment, and yet an unusually soft material for the structural members of a table.

Lacking a history of its early ownership, this table is generally attributed to Pennsylvania on the basis of its Germanic

construction with wooden pegs that became diamond-shaped when tightened into place. Several other tables and stands of this kind have been attributed to Pennsylvania, and others to southern New Jersey.¹

TSM

1. For similar tables attributed to Pennsylvania, see Sack 7, p. 1769; Sotheby's sale 4478Y (November 19–22, 1980), lot 962. Others attributed to New Jersey appear in *Antiques*, v. 10 (November 1926), p. 340; and *Antiques*, v. 84 (September 1963), p. 269.



(1822–1896) of Pigeon Cove, near Gloucester, Massachusetts. Although his great-great-grandfather, John Hale (1661–1726), worked as a carpenter in Newbury, it is not known whether this table had descended in the Hale family or through the maternal line, by which Thomas Hale was also related to the Newbury joiner, Stephen Jaques.² Two centuries later, Arthur Leslie Green, writing to Mrs. Radeke from Boston, described the table as “of the rarest type” and expressed his regret that “the end of the really good early furniture is approaching.”³

TSM

1. See Sack 5, p. 1360.
2. Robert Safford Hale, *Genealogy of Descendants of Thomas Hale of Watton, England, and of Newbury, Massachusetts* (Albany, NY: Weed, Parsons & Co., 1889), pp. 67, 254–55.
3. ALS, Arthur Leslie Green to Mrs. Radeke, Boston, 1919, in RISD Museum archives.

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DINING TABLE, 1715–35
Boston area, Massachusetts
Walnut; pine. 29¼ x 54 x 64 (open); 19¼
(closed)
Gift of the Estate of Mrs. Gustav Radeke.
31.560

Provenance:

Israel Sack, Inc., Boston; sold through
Arthur Leslie Green to Eliza Radeke,
1916

Condition:

The dovetailed drawer is a replacement.
Refinished by August Mende of Providence, 1952. Both leaves are cracked in
several places, held together by braces
attached to the underside.

Drop-leaf tables of this size on elaborately turned bases were among the largest and most impressive household furnishings in the early 18th century. Similar tables, often referred to in probate records as “a large oval walnut table,” as well as others in various sizes,

have survived in great numbers that attest to their popularity and to the ease with which their turned parts could be produced and assembled.

This table was probably made and assembled in the shop of one of Boston's many chairmakers. The same craftsmen produced thousands of leather-upholstered chairs with similarly turned parts (see cat. 93) for export to coastal American markets, the West Indies, South America, and Africa.¹ Tables appear frequently in lists of venture cargo bound from New England ports, although surviving records fail to specify precisely what sorts of tables were being exported.²

The RISD table relates to several others documented or attributed to Boston. They display a remarkable degree of consistency in their turnings and other details, evidence of “the workmanship of certainty” that one would expect to find on furniture produced in great quantity.³ For example, the symmetrical sequence of ball and reel turnings with distinctive astragal moldings at the center, flanking a pair of squat vase turnings, seems to have been most popular in Boston. Also common to these Boston tables are the molded lower edges of the skirts at either end. Other design options less frequently encountered are Spanish or “brush” feet and the use of maple, mahogany, or other woods besides walnut. Just as craftsmen in other regions besides Boston were making leather chairs, some of the most notable drop-leaf tables on turned bases were made in other regions, such as Rhode Island, New York, and Pennsylvania.⁴

Large drop-leaf tables occasionally have two gate legs instead of one to support each leaf (Comstock 1962, no. 124). With two legs on each side, all four can be fully extended until they are perpendicular to the frame, thus matching the stationary legs and creating an opulent display of multiple turnings. With only one swinging leg on either side hinged off-center, each must remain at an acute angle in order to support the leaf at its center and they appear to be only partially extended. When in use, however, whether for dining or for any other purpose, tables were customarily covered with a tablecloth, which would tend to obscure the underlying structure. When not in use and stored against a wall, the folded leaves cover all but the middle feet and the two end legs.

Though adept at turning and simple joinery, chairmakers and turners were not skilled as cabinetmakers. The drawers of their tables are often simply



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nailed together rather than dovetailed, as one would expect to find on a table made by a cabinetmaker. At first glance, the dovetailed drawer on this table would appear to be a notable exception. Upon closer inspection, the color of its walnut front is lighter than the rest of the table, and the boards used for the drawer sides show signs of wear unrelated to its present use or location. When this table was finally linked to the voluminous correspondence between Mrs. Radeke and her agent in the field, Arthur Leslie Green, the anomaly of the drawer is clearly explained. In a letter dated July 1916, Green reported that he had found in the Boston shop of Israel Sack "a very large and *very* good gate leg table in walnut—quite as good as such a table could be in spite of a missing drawer." Consistent with the methods of restoration by early dealers and collectors, though not necessarily with the construction methods of the original craftsmen, Green went on to advise that "with a drawer reproduced out of old wood it would be \$225."⁵

TSM

1. See Randall 1963, pp. 12–20; Jobe and Kaye 1984, cat. 91. According to Jobe, there were some thirty-eight chairmakers and eleven turners working in Boston between 1725 and 1760 (Jobe 1974, p. 3).
2. See Swan 1949, pp. 278–80.
3. For other examples of Boston drop-leaf tables, see Jobe and Kaye 1984, cat. 58 (in which are cited eighteen related tables); Sack 3, p. 756; Sack 7, p. 1695; and Nutting 1928, no. 956. A table owned by the Bowdoin family of Boston is at Historic Deerfield (Fales 1976, no. 237), and another owned by the Franklin family appears in Sack 1, p. 190.
4. For Rhode Island tables, see Rodriguez Roque 1984, cat. 129, and *Antiques*, v. 117 (February 1980), p. 298. Perhaps the largest gateleg table of all belonged to Sir William Johnson (Rice 1962, p. 40). Examples of Pennsylvania tables appear in PMA 1976, cat. 23, and Sack 1, p. 37.
5. ALS, Arthur Leslie Green to Mrs. Radeke, July 1916, in object file.



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63

DINING TABLE, ca. 1750
Newport, Rhode Island
Mahogany; maple. 28½ x 42 x 52 (open);
15 (closed)
Bequest of Commander William Davis
Miller. 59.258

Provenance:

Dr. Thomas Mawney Potter (1814–1890), Kingston, Rhode Island; to his sister, Mary E. Potter (d. 1901); to her nephew, James Brown Mason Potter, Jr. (d. 1916); to his wife, Isabella L. Potter (d. 1926), from whom it was acquired by the donor

Publication:

Monkhouse 1980, p. 128.

Condition:

Two of the pad feet have been broken and repaired. As the blocks securing the top of the table to the base proved inadequate, they were replaced by screws let into the top and then plugged.

In accord with a number of large drop-leaf dining tables associated with Newport, this oval example is made out of a very heavy and densely grained mahogany, has deep leaves with rounded edges, a flat arched skirt, and cylindrical tapering legs terminating in pad feet.

Underneath, its construction is equally suggestive of Newport through the introduction of a central cross brace which is dovetailed into the side rails (fig. a).

A more elaborate arrangement of three-over-two or three-over-three cross bracing has been shown by Michael Moses to be closely connected with the shop of John Townsend (Moses 1982, pp. 1130–43). Not found in work known to come from the John Townsend shop, however, are wooden blocks nailed to the underside of the top and tenoned into the rails as a means of securing the base to the top. While the blocks are now missing from the RISD table, having been removed when the top became temporarily detached, the evidence for blocks near each of the four corners clearly exists. This particular feature of construction also occurs on a Newport mahogany drop-leaf dining table supported by stop-fluted legs (*Art & Antiques Weekly* [April 4, 1986]) and a Rhode Island square tea table with stop-fluted legs at RISD, but again minus its original blocks (cat. 72). It is also found on two Rhode Island maple tea tables with cylindrical tapering legs terminating in pad feet, one of which is in the Daphne Farago Americana collection (Monkhouse and Sanderson 1985, p. 39), and the other is in a private collection in Little Compton, Rhode Island.

The RISD table is one of several pieces owned in the 19th century by Dr.

Thomas Mawney Potter of Kingston, Rhode Island, and now in the Museum's collection (cats. 39, 65, 112, 135, 139). Either he inherited the table from his father, Elisha Reynolds Potter, or purchased it in his pioneer collecting days, which began in Newport as early as the 1860s (Miller 1935, pp. 5–9).

CPM

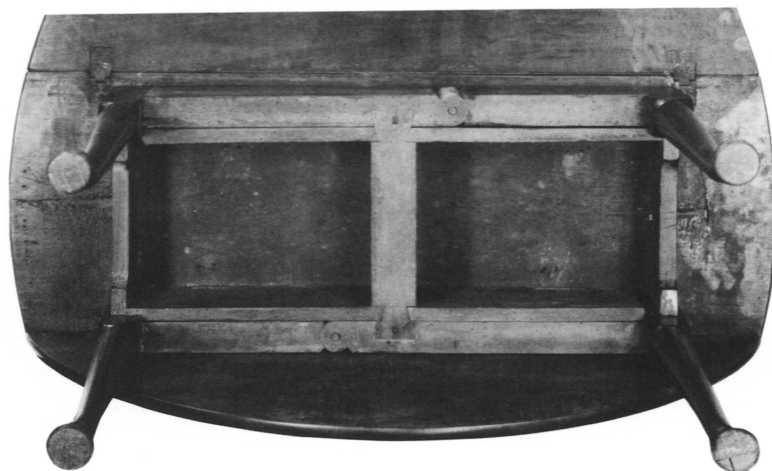


Fig. 63a

DINING TABLE, 1760–80

Massachusetts

Mahogany; maple, pine. $27\frac{1}{2} \times 47\frac{1}{2}$
(open); $16\frac{7}{8}$ (closed)

Museum Works of Art. 43.315

Provenance:

Elizabeth Dimond Church Antiques,
Bristol, Rhode Island

Condition:

Refinished. A large portion of one inner rail of the frame has been damaged. The original iron hinges remain. Casters were once on all four feet.

Probably referred to at the time it was made as a “4 foot table” or an “oval table,” this mahogany drop-leaf dining table represents a type that was popular in Boston from the 1730s through the third quarter of the 18th century. They were made in many sizes and had claw-and-ball or pad feet. A table of this size would have stood folded against a wall when not in use. When moved to the center of a room with both leaves extended, it could accommodate about six people. In contrast to the visual complexity of earlier, densely turned gate-leg tables (see cat. 62), its four attenuated cabriole legs appear to deny the weight they bear. Without cumbersome stretchers or the pivot posts of the earlier tables, the two hinged and two stationary legs insure an even spacing of legs in both open and closed positions and afford greater flexibility of seating around the table.

The table was formerly attributed to Rhode Island, although several features suggest Massachusetts workmanship. The ogee arch on the skirt and sharply scrolled knee brackets appear on other drop-leaf tables attributed to Massachusetts. The raked talons on the claw-and-ball feet are also strong evidence of its Massachusetts origin. A closely related dining table (private collection) bears a plaque with the inscription, “Elizabeth Wanton 1712,” an early Newport family name that suggests that it could be a Rhode Island table or perhaps one made in Boston and owned in Rhode Island.¹

The RISD table has none of the characteristic traits of Newport table construction.² Instead of the elaborate system of three-over-two dovetailed braces, a single cross brace is screwed to the underside of the top, and several pine glue blocks secure the top to the sides of the frame. The hinged rails of maple are separated from the inner pine frame by means of narrow wooden dividers fastened with

rose-head nails. The space allows the square hinged rail to rotate without binding. The two related tables at Chipstone and the MFA are similarly constructed.

One refinement often found on Newport tables but lacking on most Massachusetts tables is the extension of the knee bracket to cover the joint between the hinged legs and the adjoining skirt when the table is closed. By attaching the knee brackets to the skirt instead of to the leg, the gap shows clearly unless the fly leg is tightly closed.

TSM



1. Sack 4, p. 990. See also Rodriguez Roque 1984, no. 134; Jobe & Kaye 1984, no. 63; and Randall 1965, no. 87.
2. See Moses 1982, p. 1132, and Moses 1984, pp. 89–91.



65

PEMBROKE TABLE, 1790–1800
Rhode Island, probably Newport
Mahogany; pine. 28 x 30¼ x 34 (open);
19 (closed)
Bequest of Commander William Davis
Miller. 59.249

Provenance:
Dr. Thomas Mawney Potter (1814–
1890), Kingston, Rhode Island; to his
sister, Mary E. Potter (d. 1901); to her
nephew, James Brown Mason Potter, Jr.
(d. 1916); to his wife, Isabella L. Potter
(d. 1926); sold at auction of her estate at
Kingston, Rhode Island, on June 8–9,
1927 by Henry W. Cooke Co., auction-
eers, lot 563; purchased by the donor

Publication:
Monkhouse 1980, p. 128.

66

PEMBROKE TABLE, ca. 1800
Possibly Providence, Rhode Island
Mahogany with ebony and light wood
inlay; cherry, maple, yellow-poplar, pine.
27⁵/₁₆ x 32 x 41½ (open); 21⁷/₈ (closed)
Museum Appropriation. 21.507

Provenance:
According to tradition, purchased from
John Carlile, Jr. by Deacon Isaac Peck of
Providence, Rhode Island; given to his
daughter, Rhoda Peck, probably at the
time of her marriage to Enoch Steere in
1816; by bequest in 1870 to her daugh-
ter, Mary Anna Steere; purchased from
her estate in 1903 by Norman Isham,
who sold it to the Museum in 1921

Publications:
L. Earle Rowe, "John Carlile, Cabinet-
maker," *Antiques*, v. 6 (December 1924),
p. 311; John Maxon, "Two American
Tables," *Museum Notes*, RISD, v. 4
(October 1946), n.p.

Condition:
Conserved in 1985 with a generous grant
from the Institute of Museum Services
at the SPNEA Conservation Center, Wal-
tham, Massachusetts, under the super-
vision of Robert Mussey.

First illustrated in Chippendale's *Director*
in 1754, the Pembroke table with four
stationary legs, two leaves, and two swing
brackets was there referred to as a
"Breakfast Table." Its present name did
not come into use until the 1760s, and
according to Sheraton in his *Cabinet*
Dictionary of 1803, the table took its name



Fig. 65b
Pembroke Table, ca. 1780–1800,
Newport, Rhode Island. Mahogany. 28½
x 19½ (closed); 37 (open). (Courtesy of
Israel Sack, Inc.)



Fig. 65a

from “the lady who first gave orders for one of them, and who probably gave the first idea of such a table to the workmen” (Macquoid and Edwards 1927, pp. 246–47). In Chippendale’s accounts for furniture for Nostell Priory in 1766, a Pembroke table is mentioned (Macquoid and Edwards 1927, pp. 246–47), while in America, the 1770 bill of the Boston cabinetmaker George Bright to Jonathan Bowman includes a Pembroke table, which remarkably still exists. In a 1772 Philadelphia price book “Breakfast” and “Pembroke” are used interchangeably (Jobe and Kaye 1984, pp. 283–86). The flexibility in the use of the terms for this type of table is also reflected in its function, being considered suitable for a variety of purposes such as eating, drinking, reading, writing, sewing, drawing, and card playing. Thus, the household inventory compiled at the time of Mrs. Avis Brown’s death in Providence in 1807 is probably not unusual for its references to Pembroke tables in virtually every ground-floor room, beginning with the front hall where it is listed along with a glass lantern.¹

Of the different geographical regions where Pembroke tables were made, Newport may well claim to have produced some of the most distinctive and distinguished examples. Thanks to the maker’s label, and recurring structural details, Michael Moses has been able to demonstrate that the classic Newport Pembroke table came out of the shop of John Townsend (Moses 1981, pp. 1152–63). It is characterized by stop-fluted legs reinforced near the base by a reticulated cross stretcher with circular and rectangular perforations, and reinforced at the top by reticulated knee brackets. The best known of the group of approximately ten examples is the labeled one at Winterthur (Downs 1952, pl. 311). Another labeled example in the Philip Flayderman sale has in addition the date “1794” in manuscript.² A closely related stop-fluted card table at the Metropolitan Museum is also labeled by John Townsend, and dated “1786” (Heckscher 1985, p. 167).

These two dates may serve as an indication for when this entire group of Pembroke tables was made, as well as providing a useful time frame for related Newport Pembroke tables, such as the first example discussed here, formerly in the collection of Dr. Thomas Mawney Potter of Kingston, Rhode Island.

While the RISD table was not made by John Townsend, its unknown maker was at least familiar with the Pembroke tables made in his shop. Probably also working in Newport, this individual may in turn have made three related examples, all of which share the same distinctive cross stretcher with oval and diamond perforations. Of this group, the one formerly in the George Lorimer collection has the most in common with RISD’s, each having a drawer, shallow rectangular leaves, and unfluted square legs chamfered on the inner edges.³ Another of this group at the Nicholas Brown Foundation in Providence has stop-fluted legs, but at the expense of a drawer. The fourth example was formerly owned by Israel Sack and is particularly noteworthy because it makes

the stylistic transition from Chippendale to Hepplewhite (fig. 65b). While retaining the “old-fashioned” cross stretcher, its legs are tapered, and its leaves and ends rounded, just as Hepplewhite recommended in his *Guide* (1794, pl. 62). The fact that RISD’s table has an original drawer pull incorporating a classical lion’s mask identical to ones found on a Salem desk and bookcase made about 1800–10 (private collection, New York) suggests that even the tables in this group with square legs were probably not made before the 1790s (fig. 65a).

Unlike the transitional table from Newport, RISD’s second Pembroke table is fully in the Hepplewhite style. It has a history of ownership which firmly places it in Providence, having been given to Rhoda Peck by her father, Deacon Isaac Peck, presumably at the time of her marriage to Enoch Steere in 1816. In addition, Isaac Peck is supposed to have purchased the table from the Providence cabinetmaker John Carlile, Jr.⁴ They did know one another, because Peck’s name appears among those who



were owed money by Carlile at the time of the latter's death in 1832. Unfortunately there is little else to substantiate this tradition, because furniture which can be firmly ascribed to the Carlile firm is rare, and at present consists solely of five labeled shield-back chairs in the Hepplewhite style incorporating a kylix in the design of the banisters.⁵ Furthermore, there is only one other Pembroke table known to the writer labeled by a Providence cabinetmaker for comparison to RISD's. Made by Joseph Rawson, it is rather plain, save for its shaped leaves.⁶ All other documented Rhode Island Pembroke tables in the Hepplewhite style seem to come from Newport, of which there are several distinguished examples by John Townsend, Robert Lawton, Jr., and Holmes Weaver.

The design and construction of the table itself are not much more helpful, because the particular bellflower inlay found on the legs was used widely, and only the presence of cherry in the table's side rails and yellow-poplar in the drawers point toward Providence as its place of manufacture. Therefore, until more furniture comes to light labeled by John Carlile, Jr., as well as Pembroke tables by other Providence cabinetmakers, the history which came with RISD's table must remain more suggestive than conclusive.

CPM

1. For Mrs. Avis Brown's 1807 inventory, see Will Book 10, p. 304, City of Providence Probate.
2. AAA sale (January 2-4, 1930), lot 472.
3. George Lorimer collection, part II, Parke-Bernet sale 594 (October 24-28, 1944), lot 778.
4. Norman Isham gave this information to L. Earle Rowe, director of the RISD Museum, at the time he sold the table to the Museum in 1921.
5. Two of the labeled Carlile chairs are at the Mead Art Gallery, Amherst College (Lewis Shepard, *American Art at Amherst*, Mead Art Gallery, 1978, p. 246), while individual examples are at Chipstone (Rodriguez Roque 1984, pp. 154-55), in the collection of Joseph K. Ott (Ott 1982, p. 1156), and in another private collection (*Antiques*, v. 117 [June 1980], p. 1146).
6. The labeled Rawson Pembroke table is in a Rhode Island private collection.



67

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PAIR OF DINING TABLES, 1790-1810
Baltimore, Maryland
Mahogany with mahogany veneer and light wood inlay; pine, ash. 28½ x 40¾ x 20¾
Bequest of Charles L. Pendleton. 04.066

Publication:
Lockwood 1904, pl. 50.

Dining tables in the Federal period bear little resemblance to their portable, collapsible drop-leaf counterparts from earlier eras. Designed in two parts, each with a semi-circular end and a single hinged leaf, this table could also be divided and used as separate side tables. Despite the simplicity of their Neoclassical design, however, these large tables probably remained in place once assembled. This change is reflected in the contemporary shift in domestic architecture toward rooms with more specific functions, such as dining. The need for large but flexible dining tables was also a result of more frequent entertainment at home in the Federal period.



Fig. 67a

The main advantage of this particular design over earlier dining tables was its flexibility of adjustment. Often a third table with two leaves was inserted between the extended ends to accommodate a large number of guests. For more intimate gatherings, the two end sections could be placed together to form a round table. Both the design and construction of these tables relate to card tables, which also doubled as side tables in dining rooms. The frame is similarly constructed with horizontally laminated pine boards veneered with mahogany. The rails of the two hinged legs are made of ash.

Pictorial inlays of eagles (fig. 67a) appear on other Baltimore dining tables made in the optimistic early years of the republic (Baltimore 1947, nos. 47, 48). The rampant eagles on the Pendleton dining tables are overtly patriotic in their libertarian imagery. With one claw they clench fasces, the bundle of rods that symbolized the authority of Roman magistrates and became the emblem of Justice. With the other, they brandish a pike (hasta) with a Phrygian or "liberty" cap (pileus) at its end. The Phrygian cap, named for the region in Asia Minor where it originated, was a soft, conical hat with a pointed crown that curled forward. In classical antiquity it came to symbolize the emancipation of Greek and Roman slaves. In the 18th century, French revolutionaries adopted it as the cap of liberty, and it remains the attribute of the allegorical figure of Liberty.

Similar eagles with fasces and liberty poles occur on several other furniture forms attributed to Baltimore or Annapolis shops, including card tables, a chest of drawers, and a looking-glass.¹ The same inlay on a Kentucky desk and bookcase was probably imported from Baltimore, where several specialist inlay-makers worked.² The wide variation in their quality suggests that more than one shop produced this type of eagle.

TSM



68

SQUARE TEA TABLE, 1750–1800
New England
Soft maple, birch; Eastern white pine.
26½ x 31⅝ x 25⅜
Furniture Exchange Fund. 71.165

Provenance:
Roger Bacon, Brentwood, New
Hampshire, from whom purchased

Condition:
The top may be a replacement.

Unlike the other "square" tea tables at RISD, this example in old red paint has no details of design, construction, or material which readily suggest a particular geographic location where it might have been made, other than New England in general. Among its salient features is the rectangular top with beveled under-edge, which extends well beyond its conforming base. The wide overhang of the top is sustained by a transverse support with beveled ends which has been set into the top edge of the front and rear rails of the table. The

skirt is defined by a beaded molding, which also appears on the outside edge of the four posts and there gives the impression that the unknown maker of the table intended to extend the beading down the entire leg. Instead, he opted for chamfered octagonal legs which taper sharply and terminate in diminutive turned pad feet sitting on discs and having clearly defined ankles. The design of the legs suggests that whoever shaped them already had experience making pencil posts for bedsteads.
CPM

1. See *Antiquarian*, v. 17 (October 1931), p. 18; Sotheby's sale 3638 (May 10–11, 1974), lot 454; Sotheby's sale 4835v (April 3, 1982), lot 193; and Sotheby's sale 4048 (November 17–19, 1977), lot 1237. For a New York sideboard with inlaid liberty poles, see *Antiques*, v. 100 (July 1971), p. 15.
2. *Antiques*, v. 105 (April 1974), p. 873.

SQUARE TEA TABLE, 1740–70
Rhode Island, probably Newport
Mahogany. 26½ x 33½ x 22½
S85.205

Condition:

About 1910 the top was cut in half and a strip of new mahogany 1½ inches wide inserted in order to support a display cabinet slightly wider than the original dimensions of the top.

This tea table with its cylindrical tapering legs ending in pad feet perched on discs, and its extended top defined by rounded corners, is one of three distinct types of “square tea tables”—although invariably rectangular—which are closely associated with Newport. The others have either square fluted legs or cabriole legs terminating in slipper feet. An example of the former with stop-fluted legs and an extended top is at RISD (cat. 72), as is one with cabriole legs and slipper feet (cat. 70), along with a rare variation on the latter type with claw-and-ball feet (cat. 71). Despite the apparent popularity of all three types of tea tables, none is known to have a history that would associate it with a particular shop, and hence tea tables remain among the least well documented forms made in Newport. But in the case of the first type, today called a “porringer-top” tea table from its shape, there are two paintings which provide evidence for its use in Newport in the 1770s: Gilbert Stuart’s portrait of Francis and Sanders Malbone of ca. 1773–75;¹ and Samuel King’s portrait of David Moore of 1772.² These portraits also indicate that tea tables had a more diversified role to play, because in both instances they are shown being used for reading and writing, with an inkwell sitting on one of the rounded corners of David Moore’s table.

The RISD tea table is made of close-grained mahogany and, like those made of walnut, suggests urban workmanship in the subtle integration of the rounded corners with the rectangular top, the delicacy of the cylindrical tapering legs and pad feet, and the shaping of the skirt which incorporates corner brackets with curved and counter-curved profiles. By contrast, porringer-top tea tables made of maple usually bring to mind more provincial workmanship by the exaggerated handling of these same details, and they could easily have been made elsewhere in Rhode Island, if not neighboring Connecticut and Massachusetts.³ Close formal ties with the scalloped-top



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furniture made in the Connecticut River Valley further suggest that the porringer-top tea table should be thought of in broader geographic terms.⁴ Additionally, the very distinctive group of five known scalloped-top tea tables with claw-and-ball feet from Boston should not be overlooked in a consideration of the Rhode Island tea table (Randall 1965, pp. 112, 115, 117), nor should Boston’s folding card table with its rather straight cabriole legs and pad feet supporting a top with strikingly similar rounded corners (Randall 1965, pp. 112–13).

RISD’s tea table has up until the preparation of this catalogue never had an accession number. Yet it appears as early as 1910 supporting a display case in an installation photograph of the upstairs room in Pendleton House which formerly housed the Hope Brown Russell collection of ceramics and glass. That it was originally thought of in purely utilitarian terms is further corroborated by the fact that the top was cut in half and a new strip of mahogany 1½ inches wide inserted in order to support more completely the cabinet on top. As in the case of the Nutting stools (cat. 143), the passage of time has transformed a gallery “prop” into a museum object worthy of the permanent collection.

CPM

1. *Gilbert Stuart: Portraitist of the Young Republic, 1755–1828*, Providence: RISD, 1967, pp. 36–37.
2. William B. Stevens, “Samuel King of Newport,” *Antiques*, v. 96 (November 1969), pp. 728–33.
3. For more rural examples in maple, see Rodriguez Roque 1984, pp. 272–73; and Greenlaw 1974, pp. 144–45.
4. Michael Brown, “Scalloped-top Furniture of the Connecticut River Valley,” *Antiques*, v. 117 (May 1980), pp. 1092–99.

70

SQUARE TEA TABLE, 1750–80
Newport, Rhode Island
Mahogany. $26\frac{3}{8} \times 30\frac{1}{8} \times 20$
Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke. 20.1021

Provenance:

Arthur Leslie Green, Newport, Rhode Island, from whom purchased by the donor in 1917 for \$60

Publications:

Margon 1971, p. 111; Landman 1975, p. 924.

Condition:

The molding around the top had been restored before 1917, according to Arthur Leslie Green. Eight new knee brackets and glue blocks beneath the top were added and the top stained in 1984 with a generous grant from the Institute of Museum Services at the SPNEA Conservation Center, Waltham, Massachusetts, under the supervision of Robert Mussey.



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SQUARE TEA TABLE, 1750–80
Newport, Rhode Island
Mahogany. $26\frac{1}{2} \times 32\frac{1}{2} \times 20\frac{1}{2}$
Gift of Mr. Harold Tarbox in memory of Gertrude Rebecca Reynolds Tarbox.
81.155

Provenance:

Descended in the Sweet or Abbott family of Rhode Island to the wife of the donor

Publications:

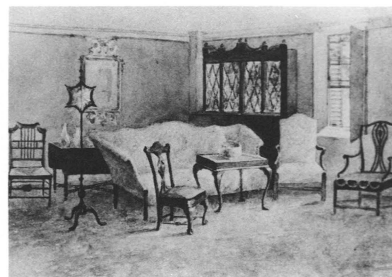
Museum Notes, RISD, 1982, p. 13; *Museum Handbook*, RISD, 1985, pp. 318–19.

Rectangular tea tables must have been extremely popular in Rhode Island, judging by the number that have survived, although none of the known examples is signed or otherwise documented to a specific maker. The construction of their tops is consistent. A single board is usually set into the frame and a heavy molding applied to the perimeter. The molding's convex inner edge may have prevented tea cups and saucers from falling, but its concave outer surface also forms a visual counterpoint to the half-round molding along the bottom edge of the frame. (A table at the Brooklyn Museum with reversed top moldings is a rare exception.)

Different cabinetmakers employed different methods for attaching the knee brackets to the base molding. On most tables, including these two, the knee

Fig. 70a

Mary Buffum, *Miss Helen Townsend's Room*, ca. 1887. Watercolor. (Newport Historical Society)



brackets are separate pieces of wood glued to the bottom of the molding and the adjoining leg. However, as these joints separated, or as the glue decayed, the knee brackets easily became detached or were lost altogether, as happened to cat. 70, probably in the early 20th century. One clever though infrequent solution was to shape the base molding and knee brackets from the same piece of wood, of which there is an example at the Rhode Island Historical Society.

The most common shape of knee bracket among the surviving tables is a simple upward-arching C-curve that repeats the curve at the top of the leg, as on cat. 71. Although other shapes are known (Bayou Bend, Newport Historical Society, and MMA, on which this table's restoration was based), the double C-curves at either end of the straight line of the skirt closely resemble the look of Chinese furniture, which may help to account for the popularity of this austere design for tea tables. Likewise, the moldings that form the tray top imitate contemporary Chinese lacquer trays (Denker 1985, p. 2).

As Heckscher has pointed out, the similarity between the slender cabriole legs ending in pointed feet on cat. 70 and those on a 1746 dressing table by Job Townsend and a high chest by Christopher Townsend, dated 1748, suggest a date in the mid- to late 1740s for such tables.¹ Nevertheless, one can intuit from the large number that were made that their popularity persisted well beyond the introduction of more elaborate serpentine-sided tea tables with claw-and-ball feet. Furthermore, a watercolor view of a Newport interior from the late 19th century (fig. 70a) demonstrates that such tables continued to take pride of place in Newport parlors a century later, as did a drop-leaf table and commode chair not unlike cats. 65 and 116.

An unusual variation of the slipper foot tea table is the following example with claw-and-ball feet, the most expensive option available on this kind of table. Whereas the squared section of the cabriole legs disappears below the ankle on the slipper foot table, on this table the angularity of the legs continues below the ankle and gives additional strength to each claw. Undercutting the talons of the feet so that light passed behind them was a risky and time-consuming job rarely attempted by carvers outside of Newport and Salem.² Two other rectangular tea tables with undercut talons are known, although both have different tops, moldings, and knee brackets and may have been made by different shops

(Warren 1975, no. 105; Ott 1965, no. 30). Their close stylistic relationship to plain tea tables made in New York and Connecticut provides further evidence of Rhode Island's closer links with cabinetmaking centers to the south than with Boston, which was more difficult to reach.³

The absence of bulbous knuckles and taut tendons on the back of the rear talons has been suggested as an identifying trait of John Townsend's work.⁴ At least they differ from the talons on several documented tables by John Goddard and do appear to be consistent with Townsend's documented work. On the other hand, the construction of the rest of the table bears no obvious relationship to the heavily braced frames on the other tea tables or larger drop-leaf tables by Townsend, and the absence of a signed tea table prevents further comparison. The possibility that different cabinetmakers may have used the same carvers also means that this table can be only tentatively associated with the Townsend family workshops.

TSM

1. Heckscher 1985, no. 115. See also Rodriguez Roque 1984, no. 17, and Ott 1965, no. 57.
2. A Salem dressing table with undercut talons was offered at Sotheby's sale 5376 (October 26, 1985), lot 92.
3. See Heckscher 1985, no. 116. A similar tea table with tray top and pad feet owned by John Walton and attributed to Connecticut is illustrated in *Antiques & the Arts Weekly* (April 18, 1986), p. 5. A possible Irish source is discussed in Fitzgerald 1971, p. 571.
4. Moses 1984, pp. 118–19, 142. See also Moses 1982, p. 1141.

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SQUARE TEA TABLE, 1765–90
Rhode Island, possibly Providence
Mahogany. 27¾ x 31 x 23½
Gift of Miss Caroline Flanders. 82.304.2

Provenance:

Owned in the 19th century by Andrew Sheldon of Cranston, Rhode Island, and then by descent to the donor

Condition:

Conserved in 1985 with a generous grant from the Institute of Museum Services at the SPNEA Conservation Center, Waltham, Massachusetts, under the supervision of Robert Mussey. At that time the missing blocks which secure the top to the base were replaced.

The utter simplicity of the design and construction of this "square tea table," which is actually rectangular, has been made distinctive by the extension of the top well beyond its conforming base, and the application of a thumbnail molding along its edge. Furthermore, the table's square legs have been enhanced by the addition of flutes and stop-flutes on their exposed surfaces, and a chamfer along the inner edge. Although these latter features are closely associated with Newport furniture, the table has a history of ownership in the Providence area, suggesting the possibility that it was made at the northern end of Narragansett Bay. Also typical of Rhode Island is the use of wooden blocks nailed to the underside of the top and tenoned into the rails as a means of securing the base to the top.¹ It is quite easy to envision a kettle stand with square fluted legs standing at this table's side, such as the one owned in the early 19th century in Providence by Anne Allen Ives, and now in a private collection.

The simplicity of this table may also explain why so few appear to have survived. When they came to be appraised for inventory purposes, tables with square feet were considered to be far less valuable than those with claw-and-ball feet, as indicated by the 1782 inventory of John Peck Rathbun of Kingston, Rhode Island:²

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|------|
| 1 Square Mahogany Table | |
| Claw feet | £5 |
| 1 Do [Square Mahogany] Do [Table] | |
| Square feet | £2–8 |

Therefore, they were taken for granted and discarded far sooner than the more elaborate and costly examples. Along this same line of reasoning Ralph Carpenter has explained the paucity of surviving



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straight-front kneehole bureau tables in comparison with the more expensive ones having block-and-shell fronts (Carpenter 1954, p. 63). Of the few related examples which have been illustrated, Nutting shows one most closely resembling R1SD's, but it has the addition of a simple applied molding along the edge of its skirt (Nutting 1928, no. 889). Sack has also illustrated two similar tables, one with a drawer (Sack 3, p. 1044), and the other with a shaped skirt (Sack 1, p. 24). Two other related examples with fretwork corner brackets are at Winterthur (Downs 1952, fig. 371) and Chipstone (Rodriguez Roque 1984, p. 275).
CPM

73

FOLDING STAND, 1760–90
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Mahogany. 29¾ x 22 (diam.)
Bequest of Charles L. Pendleton. 04.076

According to Philadelphia cabinetmakers' price lists of the 1770s, small versions of tea tables with tops under twenty-two inches in diameter were known as folding stands. While they may have relieved larger tea tables in a parlor by holding a portion of the tea service and utensils, they also probably were used for serving more intimate teas beyond the parlor.¹

Like the larger circular tea tables, this stand has a tilting top fastened by means of a "box" that rotates on a turned pillar. Made of dense mahogany, this plain but elegant stand cost relatively little compared to those with more elaborate options, such as carved leaves on the knees, claw-and-ball feet, or a fluted pillar. These were the same options that cabinetmakers offered on tea tables that cost two or three times as much. For example, according to the 1772 list of Philadelphia cabinetmakers' prices, a plain stand cost £1/15 in mahogany but ten shillings less in walnut. The most expensive tea table, on the other hand, could cost more than £4.² Stands with fixed tops used for holding candles cost least of all.

Stylistically, the design of this table resembles many other tripod tables made in Philadelphia, where round tea tables seem to have been more popular than rectangular ones. The vase turning at the base of the pillar is more unusual than the compressed ball turning found on many comparable examples,³ as well as on Pendleton's tea table (cat. 75). The feet, though plain, are well shaped and generously proportioned to provide maximum stability.

TSM



73

1. See PMA 1976, no. 57.
2. Weil 1979, p. 187.
3. See, for example, Heckscher 1985, cat. 120; Sack 3, p. 799.

1. This feature of construction is also found on a dining table at R1SD (cat. 63).
2. John Peck Rathbun's 1782 inventory, v. 6 (1772–1800), p. 135, Town of South Kingston (R.I.) Probate.



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TEA TABLE, 1760–90
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Mahogany. 27 x 31⁵/₈ (diam.)
Bequest of Charles L. Pendleton. 04.087

Publications:
Lockwood 1904, p. 301, pl. 73; Hornor
1931, p. 38, fig. 1; Margon 1965, p. 133;
Landman 1975, p. 925.

Condition:
The 19th-century varnish has darkened
considerably.



Fig. 74a
Tea kettle stand, English, ca. 1760.
Mahogany. 21¹/₄ x 17; 13³/₄ (diam. of top).
Bequest of Charles L. Pendleton. 04.043

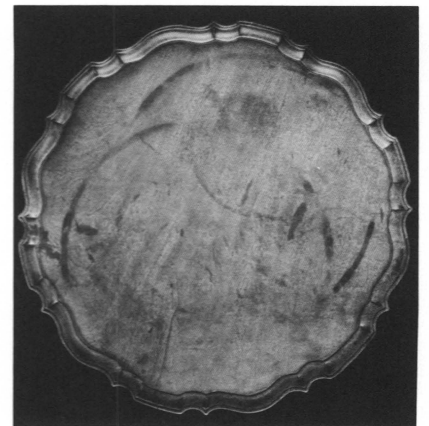


Fig. 74b
Scalloped waiter, English, ca. 1760.
Mahogany. 18³/₄ (diam.). Bequest of
Charles L. Pendleton. 04.065

TEA TABLE, 1760–90
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Mahogany. 29 x 32 (diam.)
Bequest of Leila P. Bowen. 47.651

Provenance:

Charles L. Pendleton; to his executor,
Walter H. Durfee, Providence, from
whom purchased by the donor

Publication:

Museum Notes, RISD, May 1958, p. 7,
cover.

Condition:

Stripped of discolored varnish in 1958.
Conserved in 1985 by a generous grant
from the Institute of Museum Services,
at the SPNEA Conservation Center, Wal-
tham, Massachusetts, under the super-
vision of Robert Mussey.

"Mahogany tea table top scalloped claw feet and leaves on knees £5" is how the Philadelphia cabinetmaker James Gillingham described a table similar to these two examples in 1769. Almost twenty years later, Benjamin Lehman, also of Philadelphia, listed among his tea tables for sale, "Scollop'd top & carv'd Billar [sic], mahogany 5–15–0," and below it: "Add for fluting the pillar 5 s[hillings]" (Gillingham 1930, p. 299 and Gillingham 1936, p. 200). In fashionable Georgian society, serving and drinking tea was a popular pastime that verged on ritual.¹ As a result, elaborate Rococo tea tables remained popular in the English colonies throughout the 18th century. In England, small matching kettle stands often accompanied such tables (fig. 74a), although the form is rarely seen in this country.

Tripod tables with an open block, or "birdcage," assembly at the top of the pillar were particularly versatile, since the tops could rotate in a horizontal plane for ease of serving and could be raised to a vertical position like an ornamental screen when not in use. Writing in 1828 of Colonial fashions in Philadelphia, John F. Watson noted that "Instead of japanned waiters as now, they had mahogany tea boards and round tea tables, which, being turned on an axle underneath the center, stood upright, like an expanded fan or palm leaf, in the corner."²

These two scalloped-top tea tables, part of a larger group of period and Rococo Revival tripod tables assembled by Pendleton, display different aspects of the designs mentioned in contemporary bills and Philadelphia price lists.



The more elaborate table has an optional fluted pillar that makes it appear more massive than the other one with a plain pillar. Though the fluted column appears to be of classical design with proper entasis, it departs from the classical norm by having a capital that is larger than its base. The base itself departs from Philadelphia cabinetmaking convention by resting on a reel instead of the more typical compressed ball, as on cat. 75. Two additional bands of carving and gadrooning occur between the shaft and the base. The lower band consists of alternating acanthus and dart motifs similar to that on the shoe of Philadelphia chair backs (cat. 110).

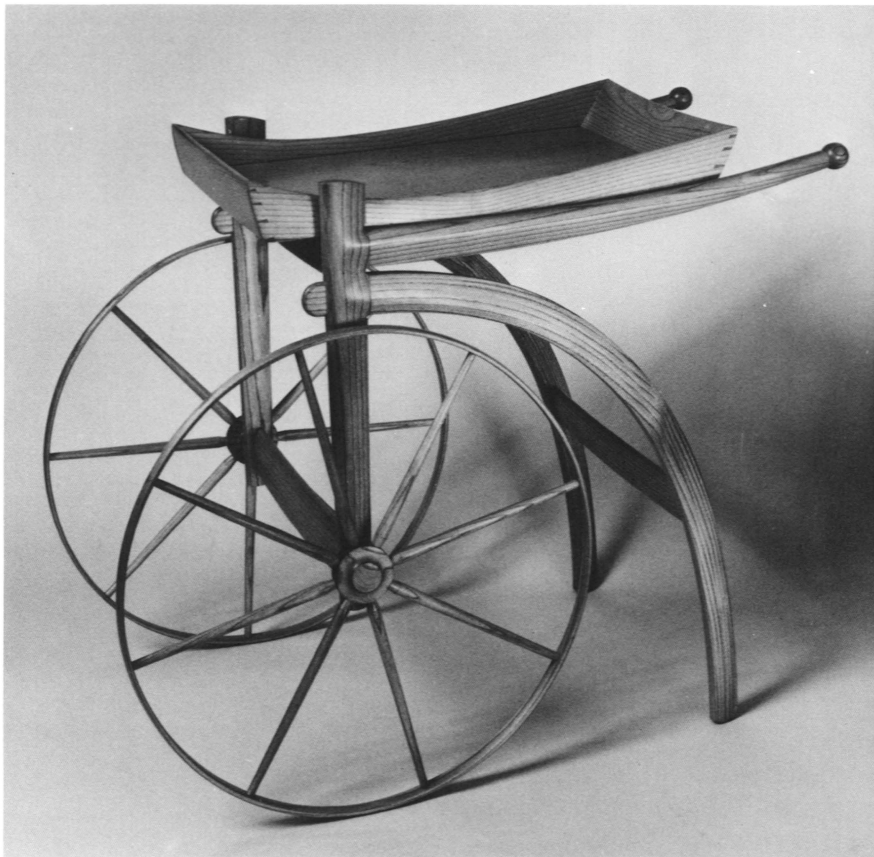
The alternate design for the pillar was a flattened ball with carved C-scroll decoration, as on cat. 75. This was the most popular design among Philadelphia patrons and was often combined with a fluted column as well. On the most elaborate tea tables, scrolls and ruffles cover the insides of the legs.³ A minor but unusual aspect of the carved decoration on cat. 74 is the addition of rectangular panels at the tops of the legs. On most of the comparable Philadelphia tea tables, the acanthus foliage begins naturalistically at the top and unfurls along the

length of the leg.

The shaping of the scalloped top in cat. 74, which was cut from the solid wood rather than applied, is more elaborate than on most other tables of this type, although the tops of both RISD tables are made up of two boards glued together, instead of the usual single board. The designs for "scollop'd" tops probably derive from contemporary scalloped tea boards, the circular hand-held trays made of walnut and mahogany (fig. 74b). Both in turn were probably inspired by contemporary silver salvers that often have even more elaborately shaped Rococo borders.

TSM

1. See Rodris Roth, "Tea Drinking in 18th-century America: Its Etiquette and Equipage," *Contributions from the Museum of History and Technology*, United States National Museum Bulletin 225 (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1961).
2. Quoted in Hornor 1931, p. 71.
3. See, for example, Downs 1952, no. 381; Lockwood 1924, fig. 745; and Rodriguez Roque 1984, no. 146.



76

76

TEA CART, 1981
Bruce Beeken (b. 1953)
Shelburne, Vermont
White ash. $32\frac{3}{8} \times 21\frac{3}{4} \times 42$
Dr. Herbert H. Myers Memorial and
Mary B. Jackson Funds. 81.298

Provenance:
The artist

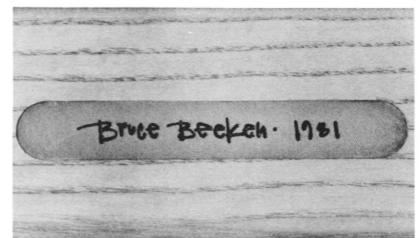
Publications:
Museum Notes, RISD, 1982, p. 17; Barter
1984, RISD, 1984, pp. 20–21.

Tea carts or wagons became a predictable wedding present between 1900 and World War II in response to an increasing shortage of domestic servants and a desire for greater informality in entertaining. Although the vast majority were made of wicker, painted wood, or mahogany with vase-shaped turnings reminiscent of Colonial gate-leg tables, the International Style German designer Marcel Breuer responded to the demand for tea carts with a sleek tubular steel model in 1928.¹ Another International Style designer from Finland, Alvar Aalto, produced his bent and laminated wood

version five years later in 1933.² Made for mass production, these two “classics” of 20th-century design may well have inspired Bruce Beeken to design his own tea cart. His, however, was limited to three nearly identical examples handcrafted between 1977 and 1981, of which RISD’s is the last in the series.³ Like its production, the design vocabulary of Beeken’s cart is not influenced by modern industrial machinery, but rather by old-fashioned farm equipment such as that found in the vicinity of his shop, which for the RISD example was the monumental complex of barns built by William Seward Webb at the end of the 19th century on his estate at Shelburne, Vermont.⁴ The agrarian aspects of Beeken’s design are clearly expressed in his statement which accompanied an illustration of the RISD tea cart in *Bentwood* (RISD, 1984):

The tea cart comes from the simple lines of some tools and vehicles of the nineteenth century. It is derived from the undecorated forms of farm tools made of steambent and shaped parts. The lyrical scythe and hayfork and a nicely shaped plowshare achieve a balance between aesthetic and func-

Fig. 76a
Artist’s signature on leather panel inlaid
on cross-brace.



tional considerations.

The tea cart also borrows from the lightness and fluent form of early high-wheeled bicycles and is akin to the expression of motion and rhythm that carriage makers lent to their craft. (p. 20)

The tea cart also reflects the influence of Oriental furniture, of which the delicately turned hubs and spokes so eloquently speak.

CPM

1. Marian Page, *Furniture Designed by Architects* (New York: Whitney Library of Design, 1980), p. 170.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 197.
3. One of the other tea carts is illustrated in Paul J. Smith, *New Handmade Furniture* (New York: Museum of Contemporary Crafts, 1979), n.p.
4. William C. Lipke, ed., *Shelburne Farms: The History of an Agricultural Estate* (Burlington, Vermont: Robert Hull Fleming Museum, 1979), p. 33.



77

77

CARD TABLE, 1765–85
New York City
Mahogany; pine, oak, yellow-poplar.
27 x 34¼ x 33¼ (open); 16¾ (closed)
Bequest of Charles L. Pendleton. o4.131

Provenance:

Believed to have been purchased by
Pendleton ca. 1885 from Miss Wendover
of Kinderhook, New York

Publications:

Lockwood 1904, p. 405, pl. 99; H.L.
Bond, *An Encyclopedia of Antiques* (Boston,
1937), p. 50; Comstock 1962, no. 368;
Heckscher 1973, p. 975, fig. 5; Landman
1975, p. 925; Stillinger 1980, p. 120;
Museum Handbook, RISD, 1985, p. 316.

Condition:

Cleaned on the recommendation of John
Maxon, 1946. Baize replaced after 1968.

The five-legged serpentine card table is
one of the most impressive furniture
forms made by New York cabinetmakers
in the 18th century. Long assumed to be
an original American design, such card
tables may have been based upon English
prototypes, although no English 18th-

century example has yet come to light.¹
Not only are these tables remarkably bold
in a sculptural sense, but also physically
imposing, this one weighing nearly sixty
pounds. The addition of a fifth leg gives
the table an awkward stance when it is
folded but creates a symmetrical arrange-
ment once the playing surface is
unfolded.

Less portable than card tables made
during the Federal period, their function
was commensurately less flexible. For
example, the baize covering of the inner
surface was specifically intended for
playing cards, just as the oval and square
indentations restricted this table to four
players using counters and candlesticks.
For added convenience, a small drawer
for chips, dice, or cards was concealed
behind the fly-leg. Their occasional
manufacture in matched pairs suggests
that like their Federal-period counter-
parts, these tables may have doubled as
pier or side tables when not in use for
gaming.

More than twenty-five related card
tables are known, although only one can
be attributed to a particular cabinet-
maker, place, or date.² They are
generally attributed to New York City,
since many, including this one, have

histories of ownership in prominent New
York and New Jersey families. They can
be divided into two stylistic groups
according to similarities of construction
and ornament that probably represent
the work of two or three different shops
and several different carvers.³

The Pendleton table relates to a small
group of four or five other tables with
deeply shaped skirts carved with a
meandering grapevine along the convex
skirt molding. This sub-group within the
larger group of twenty-five is probably
the work of one cabinet shop, although
differences in the carving suggest the
work of more than one carver.⁴ Heavy
gadrooning, seen also on contemporary
New York chairs, was a more typical treat-
ment of the apron that helped to break
up the mass of the heavy frame above.
Whereas the carved grapevine on the
apron of this table tends towards
symmetry, the rocaille carving on the
knees is much more loosely handled and
varied, consisting of acanthus leaves and
ruffled C-scrolls laced with cabochons.

TSM

1. A similar English card table
published (Heckscher 1973, p. 982)
as a possible source for the New
York tables has since been deter-
mined to be a reproduction made ca.
1900 of an unidentified table. See
Christopher Gilbert, *Furniture at
Temple Newsam House and Lotherton
Hall* (Leeds: National Art-Collections
Fund and the Leeds Art Collections
Fund, 1978), vol. 2, no. 391.
2. The Parsons family table, which is
closely related to the Pendleton table,
is inscribed in chalk with the name
"Willet" and has been attributed by
Bernard and S. Dean Levy to
Marinus Willet, a New York City
cabinetmaker. See Levy, *Catalogue 3*
(Autumn 1977), p. 65.
3. The most complete study of this
form is Heckscher 1973.
4. Besides the Pendleton and Willet
tables, the others in this group
include a second table owned by
Bernard and S. Dean Levy (Levy,
Catalogue 5 [Spring 1986], p. 56); a
pair of tables presented by George
Washington to Judge and Mrs. John
Berrien of Princeton, N.J., formerly
in the Landsell Christie Collection
(*Antiques*, v. 81 [February 1962],
pp. 192–93); and a table inscribed
"PK," formerly the property of Israel
Sack and David Stockwell (Sack 1,
p. 143).

CARD TABLE, 1790–1810

Boston-Salem area, Massachusetts
Mahogany with mahogany veneer and
light wood inlay; birch, pine. 29½ x 36 x
33½ (open); 16½ (closed)
Gift of the Estate of Charles A. and
Florence S. Place. 44.069

Publication:

Museum Bulletin, RISD, v. 3 (February
1945), p. 4.

Condition:

The top was refinished and the apron
cleaned of yellowed varnish and oil stains
in May 1986 by Albert Longo, Provi-
dence. The cleaning revealed the original
green dye on the field surrounding the
kylix. Several missing portions of the
banding along the lower edge of the
apron were replaced and one loose hinge
on the top reset.

Few comparisons express more vividly
the shift away from the Rococo exuber-
ance of the mid-18th century to Neo-
classical austerity at the end of the
century than that between the preceding
card table made around the time of the
Revolution, and this Massachusetts
example from the early Federal era. The
difference in their shapes, ornament,
and construction reflects similar changes
taking place in contemporary architec-
ture and sculpture, as well as in every
other branch of the arts. This funda-
mental revision of artistic styles during
the last quarter of the 18th century also
mirrored the radical revision of this
country's social and political values, as
the new republic embraced the ration-
alism of the European Enlightenment
after the War of Independence.

Whereas the designer of the New York
card table (cat. 77) made ample use of
three-dimensional, naturalistic ornament
to enrich both line and volume, the
unknown maker of this table eliminated
any sculptural additions that might
detract from its planar, geometric purity.
For example, the surface of the apron is
animated by flat rectangles of veneer
rather than shaped solid boards. The
carved border is replaced by a thin band
of saw-tooth inlay, and in place of carved
foliage and shells, pictorial inlays intro-
duce a new sense of abstraction. Finally,
the fluted kylix at the center of the skirt
proclaims its source in classical antiquity,
whose systems of government and edu-
cation, and even geographical place
names, Americans sought eagerly to
emulate.

The elimination from the playing

surface of inset baize, pockets for
counters, and indentations for candle-
sticks conformed to the clean lines of
Neo-classical design, but also made card
tables more flexible for other uses. Their
simpler shapes and thinner legs allowed
greater numbers of players to draw up to
the table, which would normally be
covered with a cloth for card playing.
The lighter laminated construction of
the new tables (this table weighs about
half as much as the preceding example)
also made them considerably easier to
move around the house. Room-by-room
inventories of the period confirm their
use in downstairs parlors, dining rooms,
and other rooms.¹

Boston cabinetmakers' accounts and
inventories from the Federal period
frequently refer to card tables in pairs.
Lemuel Churchill, for example, sub-
mitted a bill for \$24 in 1804 for "one pair
of card tables." In 1808, the cabinet shop
of William Fisk contained "four pairs
mahogany card table venered [sic]," and
in the same year, a Boston sheriff seized
from Ebenezer Knowlton's shop "two
pairs of mahogany card tables."² The
emphasis on pairs suggests a dual role
for card tables as matching pier tables or
as side tables placed symmetrically in a
room when they were not being used for

gaming. The general surge in popularity
of card playing and the fashion for card
parties at home may also account for the
large number of card tables that have
survived from the Federal period.³

This particular shape, with an elliptical
front and serpentine ends, was especially
popular in eastern Massachusetts for
tables with square as well as turned legs.
The three-panel design of the apron
with contrasting veneers and a central
oval set within a mitered rectangle is also
typical of Boston and Salem work.⁴
Other tables with the same features have
been attributed to the Boston-Salem
area, and labeled examples by cabinet-
makers working in Boston, Charlestown,
Lynn, Newburyport, and Salem further
support this attribution.⁵

These specific inlays, on the other
hand, are not unique to the Boston area
and were probably sold by a specialist
inlay-maker or imported by him from
abroad. The kylix appears on card tables,
sideboards, and other furniture forms
attributed to such diverse regions as New
Hampshire, Massachusetts, Connecticut,
and New York.⁶ Shell inlays, which also
appear on furniture from diverse cabi-
netmaking centers, account for the few
known instances of contemporary refer-
ences to the production and importation



of a specific pictorial inlay. A 1796 advertisement in the New York *Argus* notified readers of "Shells for Cabinet Work—to Cabinet Makers. A Gentleman has just arrived from London with an Assortment of Shells for Cabinet work, which he will dispose of on reasonable terms, for cash." A similar reference to "shells for inlaying" appeared in a Baltimore newspaper.⁷ John Dewhurst, recorded in the Boston *Directory* for 1809 as a "banding and stringing maker" in Salem Street, was only one such specialist who supplied inlays to cabinetmakers in the area, and thus helped to insure a degree of similarity among the card tables produced throughout the Boston area.

TSM

1. Cooke 1980, pp. 250–51; Garrett 1959, p. 15.
2. *Churchill v. Johnson*, Suffolk County Court of Common Pleas (April 1804), case 181; see also *Lemist v. Fisk* (April 1808), case 655; and *Knowlton v. Jackson* (April 1808), case 219.
3. See Ward, "Avarice and Conviviality": Card Playing in Federal America," in Hewitt 1982, pp. 17–19.
4. Hewitt 1982, pp. 67, 86.
5. Labeled examples include tables by Joseph Short, Newburyport (Hewitt 1982, no. 9); Archelaus Flint, Charlestown (private collection); Emery Moulton, Salem (Randall 1962, p. 414); Elisha Tucker, Boston (Montgomery 1966, no. 302); and William Leverett, Boston (private collection).
6. See Essex Institute 1980, pp. 30–31; Sack 4, p. 894; Butler 1978, no. 43; Sack 7, p. 1807; Sack 6, p. 1483; *Girl Scouts Loan Exhibition* (1929), no. 700; AAA sale 3858 (October 30, 1930), lot 87; Marsden J. Perry Collection, AAA sale (January 29, 1916), lot 82; *Antiques*, v. 129 (May 1986), p. 1072; and Levy, Catalogue 5 (Spring 1986), p. 111.
7. Quoted in Montgomery 1966, pp. 36, 40.

79

CARD TABLE, 1800–20

Providence area, Rhode Island
Mahogany with mahogany veneer and light and dark wood inlays; maple, pine.
27½ x 35¾ x 17¾ (closed); 35½ (open)
Bequest of Lyra Brown Nickerson and bequest of Martha Lisle, by exchange; Ida Ballou Littlefield Fund, Mary B. Jackson Fund, and additional funds provided by Mr. and Mrs. George M. Kaufman and J.J. Smortchovsky. 85.015

Provenance:

Bernard and S. Dean Levy, Inc., New York, from whom purchased

Publications:

Antiques, v. 132 (August 1982), p. 187;
Levy, Catalogue 4 (1984), p. 71; *Museum Notes*, RISD, 1985, p. 22.

Unfortunately little is known of a Warren, Rhode Island, cabinetmaker named Allie Burton, to whom a related card table with similar floral inlays and a slant-top desk have been attributed on the basis of their descent in the maker's family.¹ No cabinetmaker by that name appears in the Rhode Island census between 1790 and 1830 or in Warren or Providence-area court records. Never-

theless, the distinctive floral inlays on the skirt panels, the large inlaid husks on the legs, and the fan on the top leaf all relate to the decoration on other fine furniture made in the Providence area in the first decades of the 19th century.

Thomas Howard and other members of the Pawtuxet school of cabinetmaking (see cat. 52) frequently embellished their furniture with similar light and dark banding and pictorial inlays of entwined branches, branches tied with a bow, and flowers in vases.² The floral inlays on the other Burton card table, for example, combine the same petals and leaves as on this table, with a primly tied bow that appears on a third Rhode Island card table that in turn has vine inlays and banding related to the documented work of Howard and an unidentified cabinetmaker who worked near Rehoboth, Massachusetts.³

From research by Sara Steiner still in progress, abundant evidence is emerging of the close ties between a number of cabinetmakers and clockmakers who moved between Sutton, Massachusetts, Woodstock, Connecticut, and Rehoboth, and other cabinetmakers working in Pawtuxet, some of whom moved subsequently to Providence and others to Barrington. A tall clock by Caleb



Wheaton of Providence in a remarkably elaborate case signed and dated 1796 by Ichabod Sanford of Medway, Massachusetts, provides evidence of further links between local craftsmen and cabinetmakers to the north who were working in a similar style using contrasting light and dark banding and paterae.⁴ Two chests of drawers with light and dark banding and inlaid paterae similar to that on this table were also probably made in the Providence area (Ott 1965, no. 53; Sack 5, p. 1277).

The details of Burton's life and the work of other Warren cabinetmakers have yet to be identified, but there is no question that a group of highly skilled cabinetmakers were working in Rhode Island and nearby Massachusetts, outside the traditional urban style centers of Newport and Providence. Unlike cabinetmakers in large cities such as Boston, where specialist inlay-makers supplied stringing, banding, and other inlays to many different cabinetmakers, cabinetmakers in the Providence area seem to have produced exceedingly fine inlays in their own shops for their own use. On the other hand, the construction of the table's laminated frame and hinged fly-leg conforms to a regional pattern noted by Hewitt in his 1982 study of Federal-period card tables.⁵

Of the twenty-six shapes of card tables recorded by Hewitt, semi-circular tables were by far the most popular form in every region. Their popularity may have been due to their compact shape when closed, or perhaps to their capacity to accommodate more than four card players at a time. The fan on the top leaf of this table and the absence of decoration on the playing surface suggest a dual role for card tables, which were often sold in pairs and probably served as pier or side tables throughout the house when not in use for gaming.

TSM

1. Monahan 1965, pp. 574–75.
2. See *Antiques*, v. 123 (April 1983), p. 861; Sotheby's sale 4835Y (April 3, 1982), lot 327.
3. *Antiques*, v. 122 (September 1982), p. 432. A clock by Peregrine White with a related case in the Carpenter Museum, Rehoboth, was kindly brought to the author's attention by Sara Steiner.
4. See Sotheby's sale 4338 (Jan. 30–Feb. 2, 1980), v. 2, lot 1625.
5. Hewitt 1982, pp. 89, 93.



80

80

SQUARE CARD TABLE, 1815–28
Joseph Rawson & Sons (1808–1828)
Providence, Rhode Island
Mahogany with mahogany veneer and light wood inlay; pine. 29½ x 35¾ x 36 (open); 17⅞ (closed)
Gift of Miss Ida Ballou Littlefield. 84.023

Provenance:
Ronald Bourgeault, Hampton, New Hampshire

Publication:
Museum Notes, RISD, 1984, p. 18.

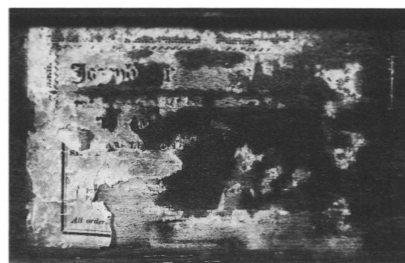


Fig. 80a
Superimposed labels of Joseph Rawson and Sons, and S. & J. Rawson, Jr., on back rail.

81

PILLAR-AND-CLAW CARD TABLE, 1828–35
S. & J. Rawson, Jr. (1828–1852)
Providence, Rhode Island
Mahogany with mahogany veneer and stenciled decoration; pine. 27¾ x 36⅝ x 36¾ (open); 18⅞ (closed)
Gift of Miss Elizabeth Hazard. 76.191

Provenance: Adnah Sackett (1796–1860); to his son, Frederick Sackett (1840–1913), by descent to his daughter, Elizabeth P. Hazard; to her daughter, the donor.

Publication:
Monkhouse 1980, p. 131.

Condition:
Conserved in 1985 by a generous grant from the Institute of Museum Services, at the SPNEA Conservation Center, Waltham, Massachusetts, under the supervision of Robert Mussey.

In light of the exhaustive research of Benjamin Hewitt on Federal-period card tables, this square table gives the appearance of having been made in Boston or Salem because so many of its features are frequently found on tables from those cities. The shape of its top, consisting of a square with elliptic front,

half-elliptic ends, and ovolo corners, based on plate 11 in Sheraton's *Drawing-Book* (London, 1802), is typical of Boston and Salem. The same can be said for the shape and turnings of the legs, the construction of the frame, and the selection of woods and veneers (Hewitt 1982, pp. 55–106). Yet the RISD table bears the label of Joseph Rawson & Sons of Providence, Rhode Island (fig. 80a). Since the label gives their address as Sugar Lane (now Clements Street), it can be dated between 1815 and 1828.¹

The apparent contradiction between the table's design and construction and its label might be explained by the possibility that it was made in the Rawson shop by a craftsman trained in Boston or Salem. The use of lunette inlay from Boston on the dressing bureau attributed to Joseph Rawson, Sr. (cat. 14) certainly suggests a degree of cross-fertilization between the two cities. The other possibility is that the table was actually made in Boston or Salem and then retailed in Providence through Joseph Rawson & Sons, a well-established practice in large shops with warerooms. The additional fact that the RISD table has a second label of S. & J. Rawson, Jr., dating from around 1830, pasted over the earlier one can be more easily explained because many Providence household accounts document the return of furniture to the Rawson firm for refinishing and repairs (Ott 1969b, p. 118).

When this table was made, probably in the late 1810s, a new form of card table was being introduced to this country from Regency England. Known as a "pillar and claw" card table, it consisted of a swivel top supported on a pillar or pedestal, which in turn sat on a base with four splayed legs ending in paw feet on casters (fig. 81b). By the late 1820s this

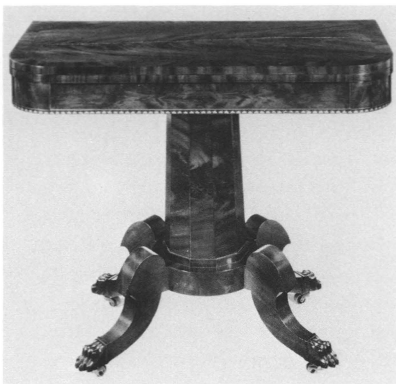


Fig. 81b
Card table labeled by S. & J. Rawson, Jr. Promised gift of Wunsch Americana Foundation.

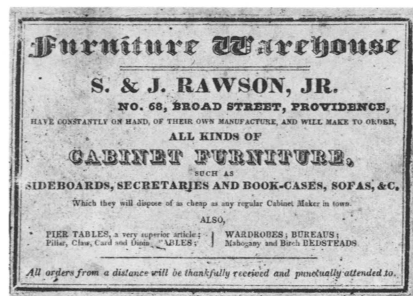


Fig. 81a
Cabinetmaker's label affixed to bottom of well.

type had superseded the Museum's Sheraton-style card table in the Rawson shop, as illustrated by the second Rawson card table owned by RISD (cat. 81). Bearing the S. & J. Rawson, Jr. label used from 1828 into the 1830s (fig. 81a), it is a rare variation on the pillar-and-claw design, and instead of a single pedestal incorporates four mahogany veneered columns, supported by a trestle base with four enormous carved hairy paw feet. For decorative effect, the table employs figured veneers in the French Restoration taste, as well as a band of stenciling along the skirt in imitation of brass and ebony inlay.² When the top swivels on its frame, it reveals a well lined with a bright orange paper. Blue and yellow lining

papers were also used by the Rawsons, and clearly indicate that the well was meant for storage.

The RISD pillar-and-claw card table was probably owned by Adnah Sackett, a prosperous jewelry manufacturer living in Providence; an identical card table, except with yellow lining paper in the well, belonged to Orray Taft, owner of the Ponomah Mills in Taftville, Connecticut.³ As Taft built a new house for himself at 539 Westminster Street, Providence, in 1828, he may have acquired his table at the same time, suggesting a similar date for the RISD table.

CPM

1. Monahan 1980, p. 141. Also illustrated in that article is one of a pair of closely related card tables, with the same label, in the collection of the Rhode Island Historical Society (p. 138).
2. As the pattern for this stenciled decoration is found on a number of examples labeled by the Rawson firm, it can be safely considered as a "hallmark" of the firm in the event it appears on an unlabeled piece.
3. The Taft table is still owned by descendants.

82

JOINED STOOL, 1680–1730
New England
Maple. $21\frac{1}{2} \times 19 \times 13\frac{3}{8}$
Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke. 20.643

Provenance:
Arthur Leslie Green, Newport, Rhode Island, from whom acquired by the donor

Condition:
The top is cracked along its length and all four feet have been cut off. Traces of grained decoration remain, possibly dating from the 19th century.

Stools are among the most rudimentary and therefore most ancient forms of domestic seating furniture. The joined (or joint) stool, as opposed to a simple board stool held together with nails or pegs, seems to have developed in England around the middle of the 16th century. Strong but light, it remained the most common form of seating in England and America for the next century and a half.¹

Within the hierarchy of 17th-century seating furniture, stools stood near the bottom. They were probably used by children or servants, who normally sat at the far end of a long table, well “below the salt.”² The use of stools in 17th-century New England houses is well documented by numerous inventory

references. For example, in 1677, the parlor of Andrew Dewing’s house in Dedham contained one table, one form, one joined stool, four chairs, and some other stools and cushions. His neighbor Daniel Fisher’s parlor contained a great table, form, and three joined stools.³ Sometimes eight or more stools are listed in the same room, almost always downstairs and usually together with a table, forms, or chairs. It seems likely that they were made in matching sets as they were in England, although no American matched sets are known today, and even a pair would be very rare.

Despite their simple design and humble function, joint stools often display refinements in their turned and molded decoration. On this example, the top and the rails have half-round molded edges. The splayed legs insure stability and are crisply turned with paired or reversed baluster turnings that relate to those on the oval drop-leaf table from Boston (cat. 62). Both were probably made in a chairmaker’s or turner’s shop, although it would be difficult to attribute the stool to any specific location.

TSM

1. Chinnery 1979, pp. 263–67.
2. St. George 1982, p. 169.
3. Cummings 1964, pp. 19, 46.



82

83

TURNED CHAIR, 1680–1700
Rhode Island
Maple, red oak, ash. $39\frac{1}{2} \times 21 \times 14 \times 18$
(seat height)
Gift in memory of Mercy Congdon Brown by her four granddaughters.
22.226

Provenance:
Descended in the Congdon or Brown family of South Kingston to Mercy Congdon Brown (1820–1895); to her cousin and husband, John Knowles Brown (d. 1898); to his four granddaughters, Mrs. Howard Donahue, Mrs. Charles H. Chappell, Mrs. John R. Carpenter, and Miss Adelaide Knowles

Exhibition:
Rhode Island’s First Century, Rhode Island Historical Society, 1986.

Condition:
Surface cleaned of original red paint. The splint seat is a replacement.

Less costly than great chairs but still more costly than a simple joint stool, small turned chairs like this one appear frequently in household inventories. Inventories also record that such chairs often formed part of large matched sets that were used in parlors. For example, the estate of Arthur Fenner of Providence in 1703 contained “3 Great chairs, and 7 small ones.”¹ Whereas many great chairs have been preserved, comparatively few turned chairs without arms have survived. Perhaps because chairs without arms were less sturdy or appeared less venerable as ancestral relics, they were more likely than armchairs to be discarded as fashions changed.

The shape of the three ogee balusters on this chair is unusual. Similar balusters were common on 17th-century chairs made in New Haven Colony, although the stiles of the New Haven-area chairs usually have single or double vase turnings (Kane 1973, pp. 70–77). Similar ogee turnings also occur on chairs with histories of ownership beyond the New Haven Colony in Connecticut, on Long Island and in southern Rhode Island, roughly the area bordering on Long Island Sound.² The ties among these areas were stronger in the early 18th century than they are today, and it is not surprising that chairs made throughout that area should resemble each other. As early as 1703, the royal governor of New York was writing to England that eastern Long Islanders



chose "to trade with the people of Boston, Connecticut, and Rhode Island [rather] than with the people of New York."³

The RISD chair's long history of ownership in the Congdon family of South Kingston, Rhode Island, suggests that it is the product of a South County turner. A great chair at Winterthur (56.10.2) that descended in the Clarke family of Kingston has similar turnings, as does a second great chair said to have been owned by Christopher Phillips of Beleville, Rhode Island, one of the region's earliest settlers.⁴

Before this chair was presented to the Museum in 1922, it had been serving as a piano stool in the "old story and a half gambrel roofed house" of the donor's grandmother in Peace Dale (fig. a). At the suggestion of the Readers' Service Department of *House Beautiful*, Mrs. Carpenter wrote to Wallace Nutting about her family chair. Nutting in turn referred her to RISD for a "safe-from-fire home" for it. In a 1922 letter to the director, Mrs. Carpenter fondly described the

chair as "in excellent condition for such an old fellow, and fortunately, has escaped the Lady of the Paintbrush who has covered so many old chairs with black, white or gold." This chair does appear to have been refinished at some point, however, probably at the same time that the splint seat was redone. Mrs. Carpenter and her sisters presented the chair with hopes that there would be "some niche in the museum where it could find congenial company."⁵

TSM

1. *The Early Records of the Town of Providence* (Providence: Snow and Farnham, 1894), v. 6, p. 232.
2. Letter to the author from P.E. Kane, April 11, 1985.
3. Failey 1976, p. 13.
4. Private collection. See Nathan Cushing sale, AAA sale 3821 (Feb. 27, 1930), lot 178.
5. ALS, Harriet K. Carpenter to L. Earle Rowe, September 22, 1922, in object file.



Fig. 83a

GREAT CHAIR, 1660–90

Probably English, or possibly Rhode Island

Cottonwood (*Populus* sp.), ash. 39½ x 24½ x 17 x 14½ (seat height)

Gift of the Estate of Eliza D. Gardiner. 55.066

Provenance:

Descended through the Wickes family of Warwick and the Gardiner family of South Kingston and Warwick; possibly to Sarah Wickes (d. 1753); to her son, Thomas Wickes (1715–1803); to his grandson, Wickes Gardiner (1777–1840); to his son, Thomas Wickes Gardiner (1805–1885); to his son, Thomas Wickes Gardiner, Jr. (1861–1917); to his daughter, Miss Eliza D. Gardiner (1871–1955) of Cranston

Exhibitions:

Lent to RISD Museum, 1926; *Rhode Island Art Treasures Exhibition*, RISD, 1940.

Condition:

The chair has been refinished. The legs have been cut down several inches, thus removing any evidence of additional stretchers below the others. The lower left stretcher is an early replacement in soft maple. Casters had been added and have been removed. The rush seat may be original.

The turnings on this massive great chair are heavier, more complex, and more varied than turnings normally found on New England turned chairs of the same date. The shape of the balusters is unusual, as is the turned ornament extending below the seat on both front and back posts and along the full length of the arms. Furniture with such agitated turnings is often associated with New York and Long Island. For example, a chair attributed to New York at the Wadsworth Atheneum has similarly deep and tightly spaced turnings, whereas a group of chairs with Long Island histories have elaborately turned rungs beneath the arms.¹ Both the Wickes and Gardiner families in which this chair descended had close ties with Long Island. Members of the Wickes family had lived on Long Island in the last quarter of the 17th century, when this chair was probably made, and the Gardiners were closely connected to that area by marriage in the mid-18th century.

Nevertheless, the turned chair most closely related to this chair was owned in the Waterman family of Cranston, Rhode Island in the 18th century, but was made in England.² The RISD chair also has a

long history of ownership in Rhode Island, having descended through the Wickes family, who had been among the earliest settlers of Warwick, adjacent to Cranston, at the end of the 17th century. This could be the same “great chair” bequeathed in 1753 by Sarah Wickes of Warwick to her son, Thomas Wickes of East Greenwich, or the “great chair” bequeathed by him in 1803 to his grandson, Wickes Gardiner.³ Later generations of the Gardiner family seem to have been inheritors rather than collectors, suggesting that this may be the same great chair that was specifically mentioned in Wickes family bequests and eventually descended to Eliza Gardiner, a noted Providence printmaker and watercolorist who taught at RISD between 1908 and 1938.

Both this chair and the Waterman family chair have several features in common with turned chairs made in the West Country of England and in Wales: the remarkable heaviness of their parts, the amount of turned and incised decoration, and the relative lack of articulation of their turnings.⁴ Because many of the principal turners and joiners in the Providence area had emigrated from the West Country of England, it is plausible that this chair was made locally but in the manner of chairs made in rural England or Wales. The woods, cottonwood and ash, are common on both sides

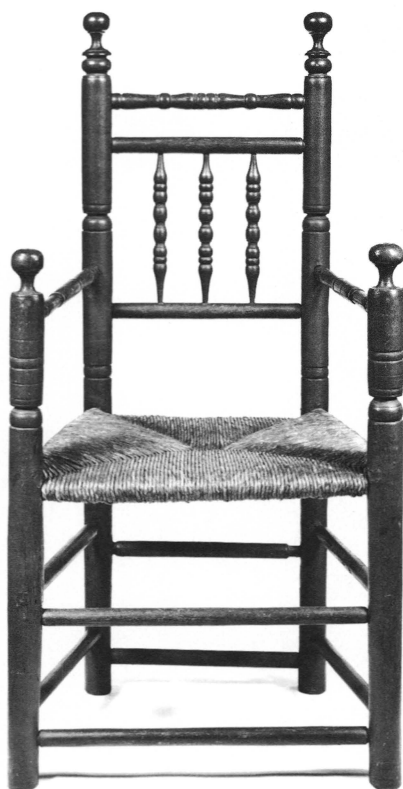
of the Atlantic and occasionally occur together in 17th-century New England furniture.⁵ The visual evidence, however, still points toward an English origin, in which case this chair, like the Waterman family chair in Winterthur, offers a clue to the kind of furniture brought by settlers to the New World, or perhaps documents the persistence of rural English turning traditions transplanted to America.

TSM



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1. Nutting 1921, no. 312; Failey 1976, pp. 22–23. William N. Hosley, Jr. first suggested a possible New York origin on the basis of a photograph.
2. Winterthur Museum, acc. no. 58.683. The author gratefully acknowledges the assistance of Robert B. St. George, who kindly provided a copy of the catalogue entry on this chair from the forthcoming Winterthur catalogue of chairs by the late Benno Forman.
3. City of Warwick, Will Book no. 2, p. 222, 226 (Sarah Wickes); and Warwick Will Book no. 5, pp. 241–44 (Thomas Wickes).
4. See, for example, Chinnery 1979, pp. 87–96; Fairbanks and Trent 1982, no. 471.
5. See Fairbanks and Trent 1982, no. 178.



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GREAT CHAIR, 1660–1720
Southeastern Massachusetts
Ash. $43\frac{1}{2} \times 22 \times 15\frac{1}{2} \times 17\frac{1}{2}$
(seat height)
Museum Appropriation. 21.059

Provenance:

Wallace Nutting, from whom purchased for \$100

Condition:

The tops of the finials and the middle spindle of the back are early 20th-century replacements. The legs have been pieced below the upper stretchers.

Great chairs, or turned armchairs, invariably stood at the head of a family table, at which the seating was strictly ordered according to one's rank within the family hierarchy. Imposing armchairs like this one immediately conveyed the sitter's power and privilege, since they easily dominated more rudimentary seating furniture such as chairs without arms, benches, and stools. Their straight backs and pronounced pommels (hand rests) even encouraged the sitter to assume a commanding posture. Though more plentiful towards the end of the 17th century, turned great chairs seem to have retained their ceremonial significance for several generations, especially in New England's gerontocratic society.

Although the origins and history of this chair are not known, its turnings resemble those on other chairs made in southeastern Massachusetts at the end of the 17th century.¹ Its less elaborate design, comparatively slender parts, and softened edges of the back spindles suggest a later date than more massive and complex turned chairs, although there was no precise evolution from thick to thin parts, as Wallace Nutting believed.² The tops of the finials have been restored above the midpoint of the reels, although the pommels and red paint are rare survivals.

TSM

1. See Greenlaw 1974, no. 29.
2. See Trent 1976, p. 29.



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LEATHER CHAIR, 1660–1700
Boston, Massachusetts
Soft maple, red oak. $34 \times 18 \times 14\frac{1}{2} \times 18$
(seat height)
Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke. 20.834

Provenance:

Wallace Nutting, before 1920; Katherine N. Loring, "Kirkside," Wayland, Massachusetts, from whom purchased

Publication:

Nutting 1928, no. 1782.

Condition:

All four feet have been extended below the lower stretchers. The right stile is cracked above the seat. The turned finials on the stiles are early 20th-century additions. Traces of black paint remain on portions of the frame. The present leather upholstery and brass bosses date from the 1920s.

LEATHER CHAIR, 1660–1700

Boston, Massachusetts

Soft maple, red oak. 33½ x 18 x 15 x 18
(seat height)

Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke. 20.835

Condition:

All four feet are original but badly worn. The left side of the left front foot has split off. The side and back stretchers are 20th-century restorations. Tacking holes indicate that the stiles were once upholstered. The present leather upholstery dates from the 1920s, and traces of black paint indicate that the frame was once painted.

Towards the end of the 17th century, upholstered low-back chairs like these two began to replace joint stools and benches in well-to-do Boston homes. In 1691, for example, John Bowles's house in Roxbury contained "13 leather chairs," "6 turkey work Cushions," and "4 stools with Needle work covers."¹ In Rhode Island, Roger Williams himself is thought to have owned a similar chair with its original turkey-work upholstery intact, now in the Metropolitan Museum (Schwartz 1976, p. 9). Essentially a padded stool with extended uprights that form a back panel, these Boston chairs resemble the common back-stools that appear in numerous European paintings and prints of the period. They were the most popular type of comfortable chair in use throughout Europe in the 17th century.

As in England, where similar upholstered low-back chairs were made and exported by the thousands, Boston's joiners and upholsterers produced great quantities of these chairs for export to other English colonies along the eastern seaboard.² Their simple frames typically consist of maple front legs with flattened ball turnings joined by a turned stretcher with a ring at the midpoint. The seat rails and stretchers are usually made of oak.

The two RISD chairs display the available design options for the rear posts: plain and chamfered or with ball turnings above the seat. Plain stiles were often sheathed with material, as the tacking pattern on cat. 87 indicates. Only three Boston chairs of this type have survived with their original leather upholstery (MFA, Wadsworth Atheneum, Winterthur). Both RISD chairs were recovered with leather in the 1920s; neither seat has the strip of leather trimming found on chairs with period upholstery. Another fashionable covering in the 17th century was the

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colorful woolen pile fabric known as turkey work, woven or knotted in England in imitation of Oriental carpets and made in panels with borders especially for chair seats and backs.³ The most common chair covering was serge, as suggested by numerous inventory references to "serge chairs." Because the back of the upper panels were usually left exposed, such chairs probably stood against the walls of the room when not in use.

TSM

1. Cummings 1964, p. 55.
2. Fairbanks and Trent 1982, no. 284.
3. See Peter Thornton, "Back-stools and Chaises à Demoiselles," *Connoisseur*, v. 93 (February 1974), pp. 99–105.

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ARMCHAIR, 1690–1725

New England, possibly Maine

Soft maple, ash. 45 x 23¾ x 18 x 15½
(seat height)

Furniture Exchange Fund. 71.071

Provenance:

Said to have remained in the house built by Edmond Coffin ca. 1830 in Shapleigh, Maine, and descended to three subsequent owners of the house, Charles Hall, Charles Hurd, and Roswell Abbott; purchased by Roger Bacon, Brentwood, New Hampshire, in 1960; to Roy Lake; sold at auction, 1970, where repurchased by Bacon, from whom purchased

Publication:

Landman 1975, p. 929.

Condition:

The present gray paint has been added over the original red. A bar inserted into the tops of the stiles (from which a cushion would have been suspended) has been removed and the slots filled. The tops of the front posts were drilled and have been restored. The middle slat has been split in the center and reglued. The right end of the lower slat has been chewed by an animal. The legs were cut down sometime before the gray paint was applied.

The sheer size and bulk of this "three-back" turned armchair suggest a date in



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the late 17th or early 18th century. The vase finials capped by flattened balls are unusually bold, almost equalling the stiles in diameter. The height and thickness of the curved slats also relate to the earliest known New England slat-back chairs, although the soft contour of the ball turnings and the tapered ends of the slats are features more often associated with 18th-century chairs.¹ A subtle refinement is the very slight peak at the midpoint of each slat, which helps visually to relieve their mass. The chair retains traces of its original red paint, more recently covered with gray paint.

Because slat-back chairs have been made and used continuously in New England, they are difficult to date or to assign to specific geographical regions. This example had always been referred to in the owner's family as a New Hampshire chair, a plausible origin but difficult to confirm without other documented examples of the form. Found in Shapleigh, Maine, in 1960 by Roger Bacon, this chair was said to have remained in the house built around 1830 by Edmond Coffin and passed to the three subsequent owners of the house. The most recent owner, Roswell Abbott, was a whittler and made several alterations to the chair. In the tops of the arms, for example, he inserted pegs to hold the board on which he whittled. According to family tradition, Abbott used the same holes to hold his pipe when the board

was not in place. He also cut deep slits through the center of both finials to hold a bar from which a long cushion would have been suspended, as frequently encountered on Shaker chairs.

Such pragmatic adaptations of old furniture to suit new needs occurred frequently throughout the 18th and 19th centuries. Low-back chairs acquired taller backs, tall chairs were cut down, rockers were added, broken slats were matched or replaced, and commode seats were added and removed, to name but a few of the most common alterations to chairs. Thus the business of many rural artisans was more often repairing old objects than making new ones. The survival of chairs such as RISD's attests to their frequent importance as family relics and at the same time provides evidence of changing definitions of beauty, comfort, and utility over the course of three centuries.

TSM

1. An early slat-back chair of similar proportions is at Yale (Kane 1976, no. 8). A rocking chair with more slender parts but similar turnings is at the Wadsworth Atheneum (Nutting 1928, no. 1866).



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ARMCHAIR, 1710–70
New England
Maple, ash. 45 x 24 x 16 x 15
(seat height)
Furniture Exchange Fund. 71.151

Provenance:
Roger Bacon, Brentwood, New Hampshire; to John T. Kirk, 1970; to Roger Bacon, 1971, from whom purchased

Condition:
The black paint is old but not original.
The rush seat has been replaced.

Slat-back side and armchairs have been made continuously in every region of America from the mid-17th century on and remain popular even today. As a result, they are difficult to attribute or date with accuracy. Made by the same turners who also made banister-back chairs, slat-back chairs were inexpensive and owned by urban and rural people alike. In the 18th century, such chairs were referred to by the number of their slats. This chair, for example, would probably have been called a "four back great chair."

Compared to the massive proportions of the preceding chair, the slender posts, slats, and flattened ball turnings on this chair suggest a later date. The finials relate to those on 17th-century turned

chairs except that here they are more attenuated. The double ball turnings on the front stretcher and the proliferation of vase and reel turnings on the arm supports also indicate an awareness of later chair styles. Of its kind, this chair is an excellent example, with several refinements such as vase-turned stretchers and particularly crisp reel turnings that provide added definition to the arm supports and the finials.

TSM

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SIDE CHAIR, 1725–50

Coastal New England, probably Massachusetts

Maple, ash. $45\frac{1}{2} \times 22\frac{1}{2} \times 13\frac{1}{2} \times 18$ (seat height)

Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke. 20.648

Provenance:

Arthur Leslie Green, Newport, Rhode Island, from whom purchased by the donor

Publication:

Landman 1975, p. 926.

Exhibition:

Pilgrim Tercentenary Exhibition, RISD, 1920.



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Inspired by Indo-Portuguese furniture introduced to England from the Continent in the 1660s, the English taste for tall, lightweight chairs with elaborately carved crests came to America in the form of caned chairs (fig. a.). Although an extensive cane chair industry flourished in London and thousands of chairs were exported from that city to Europe and the American colonies, Boston chairmakers began to produce their own distilled versions of cane chairs for export to other American colonies toward the end of the 17th century.¹

As with provincial English chairs, the seats and back panels of the American chairs were frequently upholstered with leather or fabric instead of expensive caning, a trade that was mostly limited to London.² Colonial chairmakers produced even less expensive versions, such as this chair, with a rush seat, the back consisting of turned or molded spindles, and a carved or plain crest cut from a template. Such chairs were easy to produce in large quantities without sacrificing much of the visual appeal of their imported counterparts.

On this chair, the carved feet and turned side stretchers were more expensive design options that recall their English Baroque sources. On the other hand, American chairmakers routinely omitted the turnings on the stiles below the seat, since turning them required additional lathework with an offset



Fig. 90a

Cane chair, English, ca. 1690. Beech. $49\frac{1}{2} \times 18 \times 19 \times 17\frac{1}{2}$ (seat height). Museum Appropriation. 19.221

chuck. The spindles of the back on this chair, which repeat the turnings of the adjoining stiles, were first split and then lightly glued together before they were turned on a lathe and resplit. This chair was also originally painted black, in imitation of imported beech and walnut chairs.³ It was designed to have a large cushion filling the space below the stay rail and with fringe or tassels that would have covered the seat rails.

At the time they were made, cane chairs were praised for their "Durableness, Lightness, and Cleanness from Dust, Worms, and Moths, which inseparably attend Turkey-work, Serge, and other Stuff-chairs and Couches . . ."⁴ In fashionable American parlors, imported cane chairs or locally made banister-back chairs in the William and Mary style probably began to supplant older turkey-work chairs after about 1700, at the same time that oval, drop-leaf tables began to take the place of massive joined tables. Though far less opulent in appearance, low upholstered chairs were always more comfortable than these chairs, however, and seem to have remained a popular alternative for other rooms besides the best parlor during the first quarter of the 18th century. The look of fashionable houses must have changed considerably with suites of these tall and narrow, ornately carved chairs lined up against the walls. Like the Boston leather chair (cats. 86–87) and crook'd back joined chair (cat. 95), banister-back chairs like this one demonstrate the Colonial craftsman's ability to adapt the most fashionable London chairs to a design that was suitable for export, appealing to most wealthy customers, and yet affordable for most others.

TSM

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SIDE CHAIR, 1710–60

Connecticut

Maple, ash. 46½ x 21 x 15 x 16
(seat height)

Furniture Exchange Fund. 71.073

Provenance:

Appears to be the same chair formerly owned by Katrina Kipper, Boston (DAPC 66.1279); Roger Bacon, Brentwood, New Hampshire, from whom purchased

Several features of this banister-back chair relate to a group of other side and armchairs that are traditionally associated with the Wethersfield-Avon area of central Connecticut.¹ Another armchair has a history of ownership in

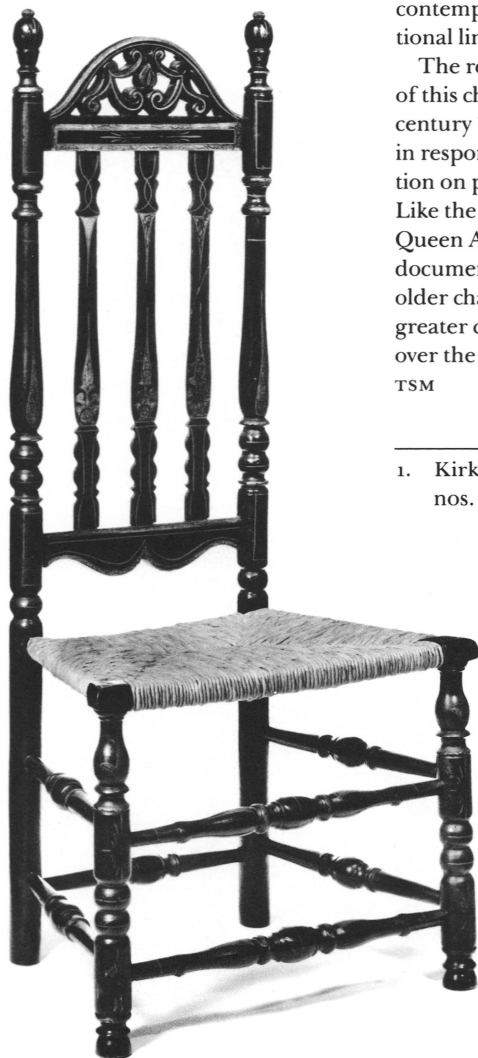
the Norwich area, although none has been securely documented to a specific town or workshop (Rodriguez Roque 1984, cat. 72). Apart from their pierced crests, most of these chairs have similar finials, double ball turnings on the legs and rear posts, a wide central bulb on the front stretchers, and ball feet on the front legs.

From a distance, the reticulated crest incorporating C-scrolls inscribed within an arched surround resembles the carved tops on eastern Massachusetts chairs (cat. 90). As on other rural interpretations of urban designs, the crest, which in this instance was cut from a single board, relies upon its silhouette rather than on three-dimensional carving for its visual impact. Other chairs of this type are lightly carved, indicating the work of a well-established shop that employed other craftsmen besides turners. The similarity between the shape and decoration of the arched crest rail and the design of contemporary gravestones suggests additional links with other craftsmen.

The red and gold painted decoration of this chair is evidently a late 19th-century "improvement," perhaps added in response to the gold stenciled decoration on popular factory-produced chairs. Like the gold decoration formerly on the Queen Anne-style side chair (fig. 97a), it documents an attempt to update an older chair. Later owners in search of greater comfort also upholstered the seat over the rails.

TSM

1. Kirk 1967, nos. 214–16; Kane 1976, nos. 43–44.



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1. For documentary evidence of importation of cane chairs to this country, see Dow 1927, pp. 106, 107.
2. For provincial English examples, see Symonds 1951, p. 91.
3. Symonds 1934, pp. 221–27.
4. Symonds 1951, p. 13.

ARMCHAIR, 1730–1800
New England, possibly New Hampshire
Maple, ash. 48½ x 24½ x 16 x 16
(seat height)
Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke. 20.645

Provenance:
Arthur Leslie Green, Newport, Rhode
Island, from whom purchased by the
donor in 1916

Exhibition:
Pilgrim Tercentenary Exhibition, RISD, 1920.

Publications:
Osburn and Osburn 1926, pp. 24–26;
Nutting 1928, no. 1946; Banks 1932, p.
29; Landman 1975, p. 926.

The broad outline of a spreading fan on
this chair's crest rail creates an imposing
backdrop for any sitter. If one interprets

the same motif as a rising sun, the "halo"
radiating behind the sitter's head imparts
even greater stature, in keeping with the
hierarchical importance attached to
venerable great chairs in early homes.
Banister-back chairs with fan-carved
crest rails are rare in American furniture.
Of the ten or so examples published to
date, all but one are armchairs.¹ For such
a distinctive form, there is nevertheless
surprising diversity among the recorded
examples. Several have similarly turned
stiles or finials or fans, yet no two chairs
are alike.

The vase, reel, and ball turnings on the
stiles and banisters of the RISD chair
resemble the turnings on the similar
chairs at Yale (Kane 1976, no. 48) and at
Chipstone (Rodriguez Roque 1984, no.
73) that are assumed to be earlier in date
than those with more delicate turnings.
The RISD and Chipstone chairs also have
in common a deep lower stay rail with

double cyma curves. On the other hand,
the finials, size of the fans, and the
attachment of the arms to the stiles differ
on all three chairs.

On the basis of a similar chair at the
Shelburne Museum with a history of
ownership in New Hampshire, others
have been tentatively attributed to New
Hampshire or to northern Massachusetts.
If a single shop or neighboring shops
within a single region had been produc-
ing these chairs, one might expect to find
consistent turnings or matching banisters
and crest rails that reflect the use of
templates. Without such evidence, one
can assume that they were made in
several shops and perhaps in several
regions besides New Hampshire.

Many Baroque chair designs incorpo-
rate carved decoration on the crest rail,
usually emphasizing the chair's verti-
cality. Unlike the Boston chairs that were
made in conscious imitation of English
models and that required the talents of a
specialized carver (see cat. 90), this rural
chair is visually as striking from a dis-
tance as high-style chairs with naturalistic
carving, but its crest rail required no
special skills or tools that rural craftsmen
did not already possess. Furthermore,
the semicircular fan on the RISD chair is
not so simple as one might think at first
glance. The radiating lines do not con-
verge at the center of the circle. Their
angle decreases rapidly towards the top,
thus emphasizing the chair's (and the
sitter's) verticality.

TSM



1. See Kane 1976, cats. 48, 49; Rodriguez Roque 1984, cat. 73; the Shelburne Museum chair is illustrated in *Antiques*, v. 71 (May 1957), p. 442. See also Lipman collection, Sotheby's sale 47304 (November 14, 1981), lot 356; Thomas B. Clarke collection, AAA-Anderson sale 3933 (December 2–5, 1931), lot 626; *Antiques*, v. 88 (December 1965), p. 799; *Antiques*, v. 57 (April 1950), p. 293; *Antiques*, v. 90 (September 1966), p. 351; John Kenneth Bayard collection, Parke-Bernet sale 1957 (March 3–5, 1960), lot 371; *Antiques*, v. 108 (January 1975), p. 85. Another related chair is in the Col. John Ashley House, Ashley Falls, Massachusetts.

SIDE CHAIR, 1725–40

Boston, Massachusetts

Soft maple, red oak, with original leather upholstery. 41½ x 19¼ x 15 x 17½ (seat height)

Furniture Exchange Fund. 71.072

Provenance:

Roger Bacon, Brentwood, New Hampshire, from whom purchased

Condition:

The frame has been refinished and the leather varnished.

Joined chairs with shaped backs and leather upholstery were produced in great numbers by Boston chairmakers between about 1725 and 1750. These chairs were exported by the thousands to other cities along the Atlantic seaboard, from Newfoundland to Virginia and the

West Indies, and inland to Albany.¹ They also relate to a group of Boston daybeds that have nearly identical turnings, molded stiles, and crest rail patterns (see cat. 94).

Such chairs, referred to generically as “Boston chairs,” eventually became a source of frustration to craftsmen in other cities who struggled to match their solid construction, durable upholstery, and reasonable price. In the oft-quoted advertisements in the *Pennsylvania Gazette* of 1742, Plunkett Fleeson, a Philadelphia upholsterer, offered for sale, “Several Sorts of good Chair-frames, black and red leather Chairs, finished cheaper than any made here, or imported from Boston, and in Case of any defects, the Buyer shall have them made good; an Advantage not to be had in the buying Boston chairs, besides the Damage they receive by the Sea.” Two years later, Fleeson was still proclaiming

the merits of his “Maple Chairs as cheap as from Boston.”²

Despite the best efforts of Fleeson and other chairmakers in Philadelphia, New York, Salem, and Rhode Island who produced close variants of this design, Boston leather chairs remained a highly successful export commodity.³ Not only were they less expensive than the caned chairs imported from London, but their curved backs made them considerably more comfortable. Inventories indicate that they frequently occurred in sets of six, eight, or a dozen.⁴

Among the design options available were a shaped crest rail or the round-shouldered version seen on this example, and red or black leather. In terms of construction, the frame hardly differs from earlier upholstered back stools (see cats. 86, 87). Both consist of interchangeable turned components that were easy to produce in large quantities and could be shipped unassembled. The haphazard circumstances of mass production are occasionally confirmed by chairs whose turned front legs do not match.⁵

This chair retains its original leather covering and brass-headed tacks, thanks to a later owner who simply added new layers of upholstery without removing the old ones beneath. As a document of early upholstery methods, it illustrates the practice of fastening the back panel and front seat rail with two parallel rows of tacks. The square panel sewn right through the middle of the seat appears on other chairs from this period and prevented the foundation material or stuffing from shifting.

TSM



1. Randall 1963, p. 13. See also Rice 1962, p. 20.
2. *The Pennsylvania Gazette*, September 23, 1742 and June 14, 1774, quoted in Randall 1963, pp. 12–13.
3. For similar chairs from other regions, see Jobe and Kaye 1984, pp. 340–41; Rodriguez Roque 1984, cat. 47; Fales 1965, no. 32. Benno Forman re-attributed Randall's “Piscataqua”-type chairs to New York.
4. See Randall 1963, p. 16.
5. See Jobe and Kaye 1984, p. 97.

COUCH, 1720–35
 Boston, Massachusetts
 Maple. $37\frac{3}{4} \times 21\frac{1}{2} \times 63 \times 15\frac{1}{4}$
 (seat height)
 Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke. 20.416

Provenance:
 Purchased from a Mr. and Mrs. Frost for
 \$1100 through Katherine N. Loring,
 "Kirkside," Wayland, Massachusetts

Condition:
 The seat rails have been replaced, and
 the present upholstery probably dates
 from before its acquisition by the
 Museum. The original dark stain or
 paint has been removed.

Throughout the first half of the 18th century, the term "couch" could refer either to large upholstered armchairs for sitting or to long couches like this one for reclining, known generally today as daybeds. Often designed with an adjustable back and fitted with a loose mattress and cushions, a daybed was one of the most comfortable furniture forms of its day. It provided a stylish means of resting or reclining in the parlors of well-to-do households.

Caned couches (fig. a) were exported from London to the colonies, where local chairmakers responded quickly with

their own adaptations. In 1707, the Boston upholsterer Thomas Fitch remarked that the armchair variety of couch was going out of fashion, and that imported "cane couches or others we make like them with a quilted pad are cheaper, more fash[ionable], easie & usefull."¹

The same Boston turners and chairmakers who responded to imported caned chairs with leather chairs for export also made daybeds like this one with upholstered backs.² Its turnings and molded crest rail relate directly to the design of contemporary Boston leather chairs (cat. 93), as do other daybeds with variant crest rails.³ Like this one, most Boston daybeds have eight legs: six turned legs and the backward-raking continuation of the stiles, joined by stretchers with vase and ring turnings.

The bottoming originally consisted of a canvas sheet laced between the rails. Like contemporary chairs, daybeds were also frequently painted black, in imitation of imported caned furniture that was ebonized.

TSM

1. Quoted in Jobe and Kaye 1984, p. 317.
2. Related examples are at Yale (Kane 1976, no. 221); MMA (Nutting 1928, no. 1591); Winterthur; Milwaukee (*Antiques*, v. 111 [May 1977], p. 976); The Old Manse, Concord, Massachusetts; and in private collections (*Antiques*, v. 33 [March 1938], p. 138) and Detroit 1967, no. 20.
3. Nutting 1928, no. 1603; Lockwood 1921, v. II, fig. 641.



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Fig. 94a
 Couch, English, ca. 1690. Walnut. $43\frac{1}{2} \times 20\frac{3}{4} \times 69$. Gift of the Estate of Phelps Warren. 85.075.1

SIDE CHAIR, 1730–80
 Connecticut or Massachusetts
 Aspen, soft maple, ash. 42 x 18½ x 14½
 x 17 (seat height)
 Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke. 20.845

Provenance:

According to tradition, this chair belonged to Minerva Starr Fowler (1797–1832) of Guilford, Connecticut, and descended to her only daughter, Elizabeth Fowler Monroe (1822–1904); to her husband Beverly Monroe (d. 1906); sold before 1907 by their son to E. B. Leete Co., Guilford, Connecticut, from whom purchased by the donor in 1916 for \$30

Exhibition:

Jamestown Tercentennial Exposition,
 Jamestown, Virginia, 1907.

Condition:

New dark brown paint has been applied over old brown paint. The rush seat was formerly upholstered with cotton, traces of which remain tacked to the right front corner of the seat.

Chairs with shaped rear stiles, yoked crest rail, vase-shaped banister, and a turned base were made throughout coastal New England and the Connecticut River Valley from the 1730s to the end of the 18th century. Though often regarded merely as “country” or “transitional” chairs, both terms are inaccurate. The design of the yoked crest rail and vase-shaped banister derives from fashionable urban Queen Anne-style chairs, whereas the block-and-baluster turned base relates to the work of urban chairmakers who were producing Boston’s leather chairs (cat. 93). There was in fact little transition taking place in these chairs, but rather a long tradition of craftsmen combining the best of two popular styles to suit the demand among rural patrons for stylish yet moderately priced chairs. Such chairs with a turned base were much less expensive to produce than fully joined chairs with cabriole legs. On the other hand, the molded stiles, joinery of the back, carved crest rail, and carved feet on this chair cost considerably more than an ordinary turned slat-back or banister-back chair.

Despite early efforts to distinguish between Massachusetts and Connecticut workmanship on the basis of their carving and turnings, assigning specific regional origins to these chairs remains difficult without documentary evidence.¹

Several well-documented examples have been attributed to Wethersfield, Glastonbury, Norwich, and Lyme, Connecticut, Hadley, Massachusetts, and elsewhere in the Connecticut Valley and eastern Massachusetts, while chairs with similar features were also made in New Hampshire and in Rhode Island.²

This chair has a history of ownership in Guilford, Connecticut, where it was one of several that belonged in the early 19th century to Minerva Starr, one of seven Starr sisters known locally as the Pleiades, after the constellation of that name. The chair was one of four or five hundred local relics selected by a committee from the stock of Eva Bishop Leete and shipped by train in three

carloads to furnish the Connecticut Building at the Jamestown Exposition of 1907.
 TSM



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1. Keyes 1932, pp. 6–7.
2. See Sweeney 1984, fig. 13 (Wethersfield); Wadsworth 1985, cats. 123 (Hadley) and 124 (Glastonbury); Rodriguez Roque 1984, cats. 75 (New Hampshire) and 76 (Norwich); Myers and Mayhew 1974, cat. 14 (Lyme); Kane 1976, pp. 92–96; Jobe and Kaye 1984, cat. 92 (New Hampshire); and Ott 1965, no. 1 (Rhode Island).

CHILD'S ARMCHAIR, 1740–1800

Rhode Island

Soft maple, ash, hickory. 23½ x 14½ x 11 x 6½ (seat height)

Gift of the Estate of Mrs. Gustav Radeke. 31.611

Provenance:

Arthur Leslie Green, Newport, Rhode Island, from whom purchased by the donor

Condition:

The crest rail has been fractured at the points where the banister and the left stile are tenoned into it. The stay rail is a replacement. Both the rear and front posts have been worn flat in the course of being pushed frequently across the floor while doubling as a child's walker. The rush seat dates from 1943.

This is the child's version of a chair which fell into the medium price range for turned chairs, and enjoyed great popularity over a long period of time extending from the early 18th to the early 19th century. Frequently referred to as "york" chairs in advertisements and inventories because they were often made in New York City, their manufac-

ture also extended to Long Island and up the Hudson River as far as Albany. The shape of their banister also gave rise to the term "fiddleback" chair. Regional variations on the york or fiddleback chair can be found in New Jersey, in the Connecticut Valley as far west as Deerfield, Massachusetts, and along the Connecticut coast as far east as Rhode Island.¹

Although the RISD child's chair came to the Museum without a history, the distinctive circular cutouts for the shape of the ears of the crest rail suggest Rhode Island as its place of origin. The same circular cutouts at the ends of the crest rail are found on a number of high-style Rhode Island chairs having upholstered slip seats and cabriole legs. Among the best documented of this group is a pair of side chairs, one of which is signed "Davenport," presumably for the Newport cabinetmaker Thomas Davenport (1681–1745) (Ott 1982, p. 1163).

CPM

1. Kathleen Eagen Johnson, "The Fiddleback Chair," *Art & Antiques*, v. 4 (September/October 1981), pp. 78–83.



96

SIDE CHAIR, 1735–60

Rhode Island or Massachusetts

Maple. 42 x 21½ x 16 x 18 (seat height)
Furniture Exchange Fund. 71.150

Provenance:

John T. Kirk, Rehoboth, Massachusetts; sold in 1971 to Roger Bacon, Brentwood, New Hampshire, from whom purchased

Publications:

Kirk 1972, p. 129, fig. 160; Landman 1975, p. 927.

Condition:

There is no evidence of corner blocks. The original underupholstery and fragments of the original red wool covering survive. The 19th-century gold over-painting was removed ca. 1971.

New England craftsmen and their patrons embraced certain aspects of Oriental design with great relish in the first half of the 18th century. The extremely tall and slender proportions of this chair reflect contemporary English interpretations of Chinese furniture, just as the rounded stiles of cat. 102 derive from actual Ming chairs of the 17th century. Likewise, the scrolled and beaded edge of the knees and the shaping of the skirt are more subtle manifestations of the Anglo-American mania for chinoiserie. The banister in the form of a Chinese vase was probably an English innovation, however, since no surviving Chinese chairs with vase-shaped banisters are known.¹

This chair is one of a large group of variants generally attributed to Newport. The group includes chairs with flat stretchers, rounded stiles, hooped crest rails, and legs with incurving, beaded scrolls.² Their Newport attribution rests upon a set of chairs with flat stretchers and scrolled knees attributed to Job Townsend and said to have been made for the Eddy family of Warren in 1743.³ Nevertheless, craftsmen working in Boston also produced similar designs. Scrolled knees, for example, occur on a chair owned by the Elliot family of Boston (MFA), and a chair with flat stretchers (Winterthur) is so close to a chair owned by John Leach of Boston in the 18th century (MFA) as to indicate that it, too, was probably made in Boston rather than Newport.⁴ Vase-shaped stretchers, on the other hand, do seem to be a characteristic of Rhode Island chairs, which in turn may have influenced chairs produced in Norwich,



Fig. 97a
Chair before removal of 19th-century
painted decoration.

Connecticut (Trent 1985a, pp. 79–103). They differ from the typical Boston stretchers, which are straight-sided and flared.

The attenuation of the stiles and the narrowness of the banister suggest an early date for this chair. By the 1750s and 1760s, more generous curves and vases with ogee necks had become fashionable. A more radical effort to “update” this chair took place in the late 19th century, when it was ebonized and decorated with Eastlake-inspired gold borders, geometric fans and scrolls, in imitation of the shallow incised ornament on “art furniture” popular in the 1870s (see cats. 55 and 56). Charles Lock Eastlake himself admired the honest construction of antique furniture and in his *Hints on Household Taste* (1868) he proclaimed the virtues of much ordinary, old-fashioned furniture, which is probably the way this chair was perceived a century after it was made. Whereas the 19th-century redecoration reflects its Japanese inspiration, the chair in its original 18th-century context was intended to be overtly Chinese.

TSM

Queen Anne style are very rare. Several Rhode Island examples exist, however, including a low upholstered back stool made to accompany an easy chair, further evidence of the use of low armless chairs in bed chambers.² The tall vase-shaped banister with its flared neck relates to cat. 97 and suggests a relatively early date, before mid-century. The shape of the scalloped front seat rail was popular throughout New England, as were most of its other stylistic details, making it very difficult to attribute this chair to a specific locality.

TSM

1. Cooper 1980, p. 59. For other speculations about their use, see Ott 1975, p. 943. The use of low chairs by the parlor fireplace was certainly common in other countries. In France, for example, one type of low chair was known as a “caquetoir,” on which one “chats at ease by the fire-side” (Thornton 1981, p. 186).
2. Carpenter 1954, nos. 24, 26. See also Ott 1965, no. 10; Ott 1975, p. 940; and Kirk 1972, p. 98, fig. 100.

1. Smith 1969, pp. 552–58.
2. See Carpenter 1954, nos. 13, 17; Ott 1965, nos. 2–6; Randall 1965, no. 133; Rodriguez Roque 1984, pp. 120–21.
3. Philip Flayderman collection, AAA-Anderson Gallery sale 3804 (January 2–4, 1930), lot 492.
4. See *Antiques*, v. 120 (September 1981), p. 598. See also Parke-Bernet sale 2604 (October 21, 1967), lot 139.

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LOW SIDE CHAIR, 1735–50
Massachusetts or Rhode Island
Walnut. 39 x 21 x 17 x 13½ (seat height)
Furniture Exchange Fund. 71.076

Provenance:
Israel Sack, Inc., New York, from whom
purchased

Known today as “slipper” chairs, low side and armchairs in the Queen Anne and Chippendale styles were made throughout New England. Their precise function is not known, although “lowe” chairs were probably used as parlor chairs or else like low back stools in bedrooms, for getting dressed and putting on one’s shoes or slippers.¹

Examples from Massachusetts in the



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EASY CHAIR, 1750–80

New England

Walnut; maple, pine. $47\frac{3}{4} \times 32 \times 31 \times 12$
(seat height)

Bequest of Mrs. George Connal-Rowan.
76.046.2

Provenance:

Owned by the Rogers family of Newburgh, New York; descended to Mrs. George Connal-Rowan (Helena de St. Prie Case) of Meiklewood House, Stirling, Scotland, by whom bequeathed

Condition:

The base has been refinished. New corner blocks have been added to the seat frame. Corner braces have been added between the stiles and wing rails, and iron braces between the crest and wing rails. A cursive letter "B" is inscribed in chalk in an 18th-century hand on the back of the crest rail.

Designed to provide maximum comfort, upholstered easy chairs were among the most luxurious and costly furniture forms made in the 18th century, after bedsteads. Their costliness derived not from their underlying wooden frame but rather from the layers of padding and stuffing shaped by the upholsterer, and the finish fabric that covered the surface. Thus the upholsterer's material cost several times as much as the frame. This easy chair, shown here with its wooden framework exposed, enables one to examine the structure that determined its finished appearance. It also makes clear the importance of the upholsterer's art relative to the cabinetmaker's, since the legs and stretchers are the only portion of the frame that would have been exposed.

In terms of its construction, the vertical cones that form the front of the arms, and flat armrests nailed to their tops and fitted around the wing stiles are typical

of easy chairs made in New England. As on contemporary New England side and armchairs, the seat rails are tenoned at right angles into the tops of the front legs, as opposed to the method used in Philadelphia and occasionally in Newport of inserting the legs into horizontally oriented rails (see cat. 106). The latter method of construction makes possible the curvaceous seat rails of the most elegant cabriole chairs, whereas New England chairmakers simply rounded off the front corners of their otherwise rectilinear seat frames.¹ The angular front corners of this chair's seat frame suggest that it was made towards the end of the 18th century, although the tall arch of the crest rail and its attachment between the stiles rather than on top of them is consistent with the two documented easy chairs known from the 1750s.²

When fully upholstered and with its seat cushion in place, chairs like this one provided a spacious enclosure, padded headrests, and protection from heat or drafts. Many easy chairs were also originally equipped as close stools. Additional evidence from portraits of elderly people seated in them has led many historians to state that easy chairs were intended primarily for the sick and the aged, although any wealthy person in search of comfort and who could afford the cost of the materials might have owned one. Inventories provide further evidence that easy chairs were usually used in bed chambers, and in wealthy households, upholstered to match the bed hangings and window curtains.

TSM



1. Morrison H. Heckscher, "Form and Frames: New Thoughts on the American Easy Chair," *Antiques*, v. 100 (December 1971), p. 890.

2. See Jobe and Kaye 1984, cat. 101; Heckscher 1985, cat. 72.

100

SIDE CHAIR, 1740–60
Boston, Massachusetts or Newport,
Rhode Island
Walnut; maple. 40½ x 22 x 21 x 17½
(seat height)
Gift of Edward B. Aldrich. 54.056

Publications:
Kirk 1972, p. 127, fig. 157; Landman
1975, p. 927.

Condition:
The knee brackets have been reinforced
with small cut nails. There are no traces
of any corner blocks. The left front knee
bracket is an incorrect replacement. The
front seat rail is marked with four
notches.

In the accounts of the Boston uphol-
sterer Samuel Grant, chairs with banister
backs, “new fashion round seats,” “horse-
bone round feet,” and “cush seats” (sic)

first appear in the late 1720s.¹ These
descriptive terms probably referred to
side chairs very much like this one,
having a vase-shaped banister (splat),
yoked crest rail, cabriole legs mortised to
the seat frame, and an upholstered loose
 (“slip”) seat. The skills required to
construct and upholster such chairs were
fundamentally different from those
required for traditional turned and
joined chairs with rush or cane seats. The
overall look of fashionable urban parlors
must also have changed dramatically as
the former emphasis on lightness and
verticality in furniture gave way to a new
taste for generous curves and uphol-
stered surfaces that, at least visually,
implied greater comfort.

Hundreds of similar chairs in the
Queen Anne style have survived, many
with histories of ownership in Massachu-
setts, others in Rhode Island. Little is
known about specific crosscurrents of

influence between Boston and Newport
craftsmen in this period. Without family
associations or other documentary
evidence, chairs made in these two
regions are often indistinguishable. Even
when their prior ownership can be
established, one cannot exclude the
possibility of chairs made in Boston being
shipped to Rhode Island. Furthermore,
chairs made in the same town but in
different shops, or chairs made outside
of Boston and Newport proper, often
vary from the standard configuration
and cannot be attributed to either one
with certainty (see cat. 101).

The design of the banister on this
chair, with its pronounced volutes and
“bird of prey” silhouette, has been
traditionally regarded as unique to
Newport chairs. However, this chair
matches documented Boston examples
in every other detail. The same banister
on several chairs documented to Boston
families and on another ascribed to the
North Shore² makes clear the risks of
attributing these chairs to one city or the
other on the basis of a single stylistic
detail.

TSM



100

1. Jobe 1974, pp. 42–47.
2. A similar chair belonged to Joshua Otis, Jr. (Sack 1, p. 60); another is believed to have belonged to Eliza Walker Eliot, who was married in Boston in 1757 (see Garrett 1985, p. 120, no. 121). See also Greenlaw 1974, cat. 48; and a chair with a similar banister attributed by John Walton to the North Shore illustrated in *Antiques and the Arts Weekly* (Dec. 27, 1985), p. 10.

SIDE CHAIR, 1740–70

Massachusetts or Rhode Island
Walnut, pine. $39\frac{3}{4} \times 22 \times 16\frac{1}{8} \times 13\frac{1}{2}$
(seat height)

Gift of Edward P. Warren. 28.116

Provenance:

Moses Richardson (1774–1859) of
Attleboro and Providence; by descent
through the Richardson family to a Miss
Richardson (probably his granddaughter)
of Providence; sold in 1915 to the
Providence collector, Elliot Flint (1863–
1949), from whom acquired by the donor

Condition:

The banister is off-center to the left and
the front of the shoe has split off, per-
haps when the chair was refinished. The
top right of the crest rail has been pieced.
Holes from old metal braces on the rear
legs have been filled. The triangular corner
blocks and loose seat frame are new.

Several details distinguish this side chair
from the classic Massachusetts and

Rhode Island examples of the form (see
cats. 100, 102). The very gradual swell
and taper of the medial stretcher is
unusual, even for a Massachusetts chair,
as is the incised ring at its midpoint. Even
more unusual for a seemingly high-style
chair is the substitution of a rectangular
rear stretcher, normally associated with
earlier joined chairs, for a matching
swelled stretcher.

The turnings of the side stretchers also
vary from the standard Queen Anne-
style configuration, in which a distinct
ring usually occurs several inches in front
of the block that joins the rear leg. On
this chair, the flared central portion of
the stretcher extends all the way back to
a ring against the front of the block.

Such subtle stylistic variations often
reveal where chairs were made. In this
instance, however, neither the ornament
nor the construction resembles other
chairs documented to Massachusetts and
Rhode Island. A handwritten label on
the rear seat rail does provide a clue to
its possible origin. It states:

This old William and Mary chair was
made about 1725. It is supposed to
have been handed down by inheritance
to Moses Richardson (1775–1859)
who was born in Attleboro, moved to
Providence 1803, owned and died in
the house on Benevolent at First back
of the Parish House of Dr. Lord's
Unitarian Church. The chair con-
tinued in the Richardson family until
1915, when Miss Richardson sold it to
Elliot Flint both of Providence.

Moses Richardson actually lived in
Attleboro until the 1820s and was part
owner and manager of the Ingraham,
Richardson & Co. cotton manufactory.
He married Eliza Andrews of Providence
and first appears in the Providence
directory of 1826.¹ If his inherited chair
descended in the Richardson family, who
had been farmers in Attleboro since the
early 18th century, it may have been
made there or perhaps in nearby Provi-
dence, rather than in Newport or Boston,
the cities to which such chairs are almost
always ascribed. A craftsman working
outside these traditional style centers
would have been more likely to retain an
old-fashioned rectangular stretcher or
create an unusual medial stretcher than
chairmakers in Boston or Newport who
made such chairs by the thousands and
relied on standardized parts. To date, no
Queen Anne-style chairs have been
documented to Providence, and yet they
must have been made here, just as they
were made elsewhere in urban and rural
New England.

Despite the 1725 date suggested on the
label, chairs with cabriole legs did not
appear even in Boston until the 1730s.²
Similarly attenuated and rectangular
stretchers also appear on Chippendale-
style chairs from the third quarter of
the 18th century, suggesting that the
Richardson chair could be a late example
of a design that remained popular in
New England for several decades, per-
haps made as late as the time Moses
Richardson was born.

Considered within the broader context
of Mrs. Radeke's program to acquire
American decorative arts for the
Museum, the gift of an American chair
from E.P. Warren is noteworthy. Edward
Perry Warren (1860–1928), born in
Boston to a family of paper manufac-
turers, was one of the greatest connois-
seurs and collectors of his time of Greek
and Roman marbles, bronzes, ceramics,
jewelry, and coins. He lived as an
expatriate in Sussex, England, where he
served as agent for the Museum of Fine
Arts, Boston, systematically acquiring



antiquities of the highest quality. With the building of new quarters on the Fenway, however, the MFA had fewer funds for the purchase of works of art. Around 1900, about the same time that Warren must have sensed Boston's withdrawal, Mrs. Radeke was exploring a more modest arrangement with Warren through the good offices of Daniel Berkeley Updike, the distinguished printer and graphic designer from Providence. By 1901, Warren, encouraged by "the liberty of selection" Mrs. Radeke allowed him, was buying antique works of art as well as Renaissance paintings, textiles, and metalwork for RISD.

Warren owned a summer house in Westbrook, Maine, that was furnished mostly with "utilitarian" English furniture and two or three American pieces.⁴ It is not clear why he would have bought this particular chair in Providence in the teens. Along with an English chair given in 1911, this was an unusual gift for an expatriate connoisseur of Greek art, but perhaps intended as a tribute to his friend Mrs. Radeke, with whose plans for a series of American period rooms in the Museum Warren was no doubt familiar.

TSM

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SIDE CHAIR, 1735–70

Rhode Island

Maple. 39½ x 21½ x 16¾ x 16½
(seat height)

Bequest of Jonathan Edwards Harlow in memory of Ella Hodges Harlow. 35.269

Provenance:

Ella Hodges Harlow (1855–1930) of Providence and Boston; to her husband, Jonathan Edwards Harlow, Brookline, Massachusetts

Publications:

Kirk 1972, p. 130, fig. 162; Landman 1975, p. 927; Kirk 1977, p. 73, fig. 55.

Exhibition:

The Ellis Memorial Antiques Show, Boston, 1973

Condition:

The front and side knee brackets of the left front leg and side bracket of the right front leg are replacements. The chair was once painted black. The seat is notched "v" and the seat frame "III."

Few chairs exhibit the combination of rounded stiles, a deeply cut-out banister, and square seat found in this chair, although each of these features occurs on other stylish chairs made in Rhode Island.¹ The multiple S-curves of the vase-shaped banister, the pronounced volutes at its top, and the distinctive bird-like silhouette of the negative space between the banister and stiles are all traits associated with the finest Newport workmanship. However, most patrons willing to pay for such refined details evidently preferred the more stylish curves of a compass seat to the conservative square seat found on this chair.

The round stiles set this example apart from most other American chairs in the Queen Anne style, which have flat stiles. The use of round stiles was common on English chairs of the early Georgian period but unusual in this country, where they rarely appear except on chairs made in Newport and a few highly developed chairs from Philadelphia (cat. 106).² Their roundness, which contrasts with the flat banister, and their forward curve,

1. See John Adams Vinton, *The Richardson Memorial* (Portland, Maine: Brown Thurston and Co., 1876), p. 404; John Daggett, *A Sketch of the History of Attleborough* (Boston: Samuel Usher, 1894), p. 577.
2. Jobe 1974, p. 42.
3. The only biography of Warren is Osbert Burdett and E.H. Goddard, *Edward Perry Warren: The Biography of a Connoisseur* (London: 1941). For Warren's collecting activities on behalf of museums other than Boston, see Kevin Herbert, *Ancient Art in Bowdoin College* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1964), introduction. See letter dated Sept. 15, 1911, RISD Museum, registrar's office, and RISD *Bulletin*, v. 17, (January 1929), p. 11. See also Walter Muir Whitehill, *Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. A Centennial History*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard Univ. Press, 1970), v. I: pp. 142–171; and Calvin Tomkins, *Merchants and Masterpieces. The Story of the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., 1973), pp. 122–23.
4. Edward Perry Warren collection, AAA-Anderson Galleries, sale 3867 (November 29, 1930).



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which intersects the backward bow of the banister, recall Chinese chairs and their English counterparts from the 1710s and 1720s based on Chinese designs.³ Compared to their English counterparts, American chairs from this period tend to retain the tall and narrow proportions of older turned chairs. The result in this case is actually closer in spirit to Chinese sources than is the lower and broader English equivalent. On the other hand, the use of turned stretchers and the animated outline of the banister are peculiarly American adaptations that speak for the union of a new stylistic vocabulary with traditional chairmaking technology.

The best-documented Rhode Island chairs with round stiles are a set incorporating compass seats and carved shells on the crest rail. They belonged to Moses Brown, a wealthy Providence merchant, and were probably made for him by John Goddard of Newport in 1763 (Carpenter 1954, no. 11). A set of less elaborate chairs (SPNEA) similar to this one has been recently attributed to Goddard's shop on the basis of its shared provenance with another set nearly identical to Moses Brown's (Jobe and Kaye 1984, no. 97). Although their vase-shaped banisters are less elaborately shaped than this chair's, their round stiles, square seats, scalloped seat rails, and turned stretchers all relate closely. Together with two other sets of Newport chairs commissioned at the same time by the same individual, the SPNEA chairs demonstrate the range of Queen Anne-style chairs produced concurrently by a single shop and document the range of elaboration sought by a single customer. If Newport chairs with compass seats, carved shells, and claw-and-ball feet represent the ultimate expression of early Georgian taste in America, then this chair represents a less costly alternative with more subtle traces of chinoiserie.

This chair descended in the family of Ella Hodges Harlow, who was born in Providence and whose forebears on both sides lived and died in the Providence area. The probate inventory of her maternal grandfather, Nathaniel Tingley Morse (1800–1869) of Attleboro and Providence, lists “4 spring feet chairs.”⁴ It would be tempting to interpret the term “spring feet” as a reference to chairs with cabriole legs. The notches on the seat rail indicate that this chair did belong to a set of at least five. Unfortunately the inventories of other Hodges and Morse ancestors are not sufficiently

specific to enable us to identify this particular chair.

TSM

1. A closely related chair is in the George Waterman, Jr. collection. See Kirk 1982, fig. 796.
2. Other Rhode Island chairs with rounded stiles and square seats vary in the design of their banisters, shaped seat rails, and stretchers. See the Francis Hill Bigelow collection, AAA sale 1795 (January 17, 1924), lot 142; *Antiques*, v. 117 (May 1980), p. 827; Hagler 1976, p. 28; and Ott 1965, no. 3. Similar chairs were probably also made in Massachusetts and Connecticut. See, for example, Christie's sale 5028 (December 12, 1980), lot 622; and Sotheby's sale 4048 (November 17–19, 1977), lot 1151, for a pair that descended in the Roger Sherman family of New Haven.
3. See also Kirk 1982, nos. 780, 782, 786, 788–89, 794–95.
4. City of Providence Probate, Will Book 22, p. 405, no. A9741 (1869).

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SIDE CHAIR, 1740–65

Newport, Rhode Island

Walnut; maple. 41 x 21½ x 17 x 21
(seat height)

Gift of Helen Brown Hunt Tucker.
77.091

Provenance:

According to tradition, descended in the family of Roger Williams to John (d. 1870) and Julia Williams of North Providence; to their daughters, the Misses Juliet (d. 1905) and Octavia Williams (d. 1916); given ca. 1890 to their neighbor, Mary Amanda Brown Hunt (1851–1939); to her daughter, the donor

Publication:

Monkhouse 1980, p. 129, fig. 3.

Condition:

The chair and its loose seat were conserved by a generous grant from the Institute of Museum Services, at SPNEA Conservation Center, Waltham, Massachusetts, under the supervision of Robert Mussey.

Chairs of this general type with carved shells and compass seats are often attri-



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buted to Newport. Yet a 1750 reference to chairs with “eagles foot a shell on the knee” in the estate of the Boston upholsterer Theodore Wheelwright implies that Boston shops were also producing similar chairs (Lyon 1891, p. 161). A group of New York chairs have closely related shells on their crest rails, and recent research has uncovered several chairs with other traditional “Newport” features that were owned by Massachusetts families in the 18th century.¹ This chair, however, has a long history of ownership in this state, having descended in the family of Roger Williams, the founder of Rhode Island.

Compared to related chairs with square seats, the serpentine lines of the compass seat merge more gracefully with the cabriole legs. The multiple curves eliminate an otherwise awkward transition at the front corners. The curving rails with a raised edge to hold the loose seat were carved from solid pieces of walnut, set vertically and pinned to the squared tops of the front legs. Philadelphia chairmakers used a different technique to achieve the same result (see cat. 106). Whereas straight rails could be easily run off with a plane, serpentine rails required considerably more effort to produce, hence their greater expense and relative rarity as a design option.

The seat rail of this chair is numbered “III,” indicating that it belonged to a larger set which, according to the donor, had been used as dining room chairs. The new green upholstery has been made as a slip cover to protect the old (original?) black haircloth still attached to the loose seat frame, as well as the original webbing and underupholstery of linen, marsh grass and hair.

TSM

1. Similar chairs with “Newport” features were owned in the 18th century by Thomas Williams of Deerfield (Fales 1976, no. 79), Stephen Salisbury of Worcester (Reutlinger 1975, no. 65), Jason Haven of Dedham (Dedham Historical Society), the Warren family of Boston (Henry Ford Museum), Ebenezer Gay of Hingham (Sotheby’s sale 5473 [June 26, 1986], lot 119), and others. These were the subject of research in 1978 by Jeanne A. Vibert, who generously provided a copy of her paper on Newport-attributed Queen Anne-style chairs submitted to Benno Forman, Winterthur Museum. See also Jobe and Kaye 1984, no. 99.

104

SIDE CHAIR, 1740–60 (one of a pair)
Newport, Rhode Island
Walnut; pine. 39 x 21½ x 16 x 16 (seat height)

Gift of the Estate of Robert Simmons Phillips. 44.669

Provenance:

Descended in the family of the donor’s mother, Harriet (Simmons) Phillips of Bristol, Rhode Island; to Robert Simmons Phillips (1873–1944) of Providence

Publications:

Carpenter 1954, no. 7; Comstock 1962, no. 160; Margon 1965, p. 107.

Exhibitions:

Formerly on loan from the donor to the Newport Historical Society, Wanton-Lyman-Hazard House, Newport; *Hunter House Loan Exhibition*, Preservation Society of Newport County, 1953.

Condition:

Cleaned and refinished. The banister of one chair has been reshaped, presumably after damage to the volute. Both chairs have new loose seat frames. Tack holes indicate that both were once upholstered over the rails.

The stiles on this chair bend inward with a graceful serpentine curve that repeats the shape of the banister. In keeping with the taste for ogee curves wherever straight lines on chairs had been before, the stiles and crest rail mimic the line of the cabriole legs as they continue across the knee brackets and across the front seat rail. Shaped stiles set these chairs apart from less elaborate versions of the same design with plain stiles, as on cat. 103. The trapezoidal seats, on the other hand, were a less expensive option than the more stylish compass seats, which required greater skill to shape and construct. The buyer of this chair would have paid extra for the carved shell on the crest rail.

At some point in the course of a full life, one of the undercut volutes at the top of the banister on one chair must have broken off. A typical solution in the 19th century was to reshape the other half of a broken piece to match. As a result, the chairs in this pair no longer match each other exactly, but they serve as instructive reminders of an older philosophy of restoration.

TSM



104

ROUNABOUT CHAIR, 1760–90
Possibly Newport, Rhode Island, or New York City
Mahogany; maple, pine. 44 x 30 x 25 x 16 (seat height)
Bequest of Charles L. Pendleton. 04.088

Provenance:

This chair may correspond to the "corner chair-high back" listed ca. 1885 in Pendleton's account book as "bought of Mr. Coleman, Portsmouth, NH/first cost \$25.00/freight and cartage [to Providence] \$1.50."

Publications:

Lockwood 1904, p. 305, pl. 74; Landman 1975, p. 727.

Condition:

A commode seat frame painted yellow ochre and stamped "W. RICE," probably the name of a later owner, has been added beneath the loose seat. The rear portion of the rear foot and outer portion of the right foot have been replaced.

The left knee bracket of the rear leg is new.

The precise function of "corner," "writing," "barber's," "smoking," or "roundabout" chairs has not been clearly established, although various functions are suggested by these descriptive period terms for the same form. They were well suited for use as desk or writing chairs, since their curved shape allowed the sitter to turn from the writing surface to anyone else in the room without having to move the chair. Roundabout chairs may also have served as library chairs, as suggested by Copley's portrait of John Bours seated in one and striking a contemplative pose with a book in hand (Prown 1966, v. 1, fig. 93). They were also often equipped as close stools, although the commode seat on this chair is probably a later addition, since the seat lacks the deep rails that customarily concealed such devices. "Barber's chair," a popular British name for these chairs, indicates yet another private function. Evidence of other specialized uses

appears in the account books of the Gillows firm of Lancaster, England, in which similar chairs are called "smoking chairs," a term that does not seem to have been current in this country. Finally, Wallace Nutting recalled the name "buffet," and explained that roundabout chairs often stood in the corner of a room "to occupy the position in which a buffet would otherwise have been" (Nutting 1928, v. 3, p. 163).

The regional origin of this chair is as difficult to establish as its function. Because high backs are rare on American roundabout chairs from any region or period, there is little basis for comparison, except with the comb backs on Windsor furniture. Differences between related chairs attributed to Newport and those attributed to New York City are difficult to discern. The similarity between chairs produced in these two cities may be explained in part by the close ties between Quaker craftsmen such as Joshua Delaplaine, who sold furniture made by Christopher Townsend, and patrons such as Pierre Van Cortlandt, who ordered Newport chairs for his New York house (Price 1977, pp. 78–79).

Undoubtedly the most magnificent and best documented roundabout chairs were made in Newport, although none of the documented chairs has a high back. The deep serpentine rails on this chair resemble those on Newport chairs. The scrolled ends of the crest rail also recall the diminutive scrolls on the bracket feet of some Townsend and Goddard case furniture. Scrollwork banisters, on the other hand, occur on chairs from both regions, as do serpentine stiles and heavy, plain legs. The most closely related chair to this one with a high back is at Winterthur, where it is ascribed to New York City (Downs 1952, no. 67).

It is tempting to believe that this unusual chair may have helped inspire the remarkable collection of high-backed roundabout chairs formed by Thomas B. Clarke of New York and Southampton, a great admirer of Pendleton who later acknowledged his debt to him as a model collector (see p. 33). Although mostly of English origin, Clarke's encyclopedic collection contained more than eighty roundabout chairs made throughout the 18th century and collected over a span of twenty years.¹

TSM



1. Thomas B. Clarke collection, AAA sale 3933 (December 2–5, 1931).

SIDE CHAIR, 1740–60
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Walnut; pine. 42 x 20 x 16 x 17¼
(seat height)
Bequest of Charles L. Pendleton, by
exchange. 68.167

Provenance:

Said by Sack to have descended in
the Bonschur family of Philadelphia;
Israel Sack, Inc., New York, from whom
purchased

Publications:

Sack 2, p. 430; *Museum Notes*, RISD, v. 55
(December 1968), pp. 17–18; Kirk 1972,
p. 72, fig. 54; Landman 1975, p. 932;
Museum Handbook, RISD, 1985, no. 266.

Though modest by English standards,
this early Georgian side chair is a para-
gon of Baroque design in America. Its
sculptural curves emerge without benefit
of the carving or gilding seen on many
contemporary English chairs. The ubi-
quitous serpentine line, defined by
William Hogarth as the “line of beauty,”
varies in its rhythms, from the stiles and
compass seat, to the vase-shaped ban-
ister, to the small volutes on the crest rail
and knee brackets. Indeed, the only
straight line on this chair occurs at the
very base of the banister. As a result, the
chair interacts with the space around it
to a degree that is exceeded only by the
few armchairs made in the same style.

Compared to contemporary New
England chairs with compass seats and
cabriole legs, the lines of this chair are
much more elaborate. In place of a yoked
crest, the scrolled crest on this chair rises
upward, as if it were an extension of the
banister that overlapped the stiles. The
rounded stiles enhance the fluidity of the
back and recall ever-popular Oriental
chair designs.

The construction of the seat frame
differs significantly from New England
chairs with compass seats, which gen-
erally have planed seat rails set vertically
and mortised into the tops of the front
legs (see cats. 100, 103). On this chair, the
seat rails consist of thick boards laid
horizontally and tenoned through the
rear posts. The front legs are set into
holes drilled through the front corners
of the frame. The loose seat is then held
in place by an applied rim. Benno
Forman proposed that this technique
reflected the influence of German chair-
making traditions on Anglo-American
furniture.¹ On the other hand, the
design of the trifold foot with a raised

tongue extending up the leg is an Irish
detail.² Whatever its origins, the solid
construction of the frame permitted the
chairmaker to eliminate stretchers and
to exaggerate the curve of the compass
seat.

The Roman numeral “VIII” cut into the
top of the front seat rail indicates that
this chair originally formed part of a
much larger set. Others that appear to
match were formerly in the collection of
Mrs. J. Insley Blair and have been
illustrated elsewhere.³ The left seat rail is
also numbered “IIII,” the front of the
loose seat frame “II,” and the right side
“IX.” These marks may have been
intended to guide a member of the chair-
maker’s shop in assembling the compo-
nents of the set.

TSM

1. Benno M. Forman, “German Influences in Pennsylvania Furniture,” in Scott T. Swank, ed., *Arts of the Pennsylvania Germans* (New York: W.W. Norton, for the Henry Francis du Pont Winterthur Museum), 1983, pp. 168–69.
2. See PMA 1976, cat. 27.
3. See Parke-Bernet sale 1485 (January 22–23, 1954), lot 369. See also *Antiques*, v. 109 (February 1976), p. 285; Sack 6, p. 1531, and Sack 7, p. 1716.



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SIDE CHAIR, 1755–90
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Walnut; pine. $40\frac{1}{2} \times 21 \times 19 \times 17\frac{1}{2}$
(seat height)
Gift of the Estate of Mrs. Gustav Radeke.
31.612

Compared to the other Philadelphia side chairs with solid banisters in this collection, this chair with trified feet and trapezoidal loose seat was probably the least expensive model of this popular type. The bold shaping of the crest rail and the design of the upper half of the banister are closely related to the following chair, and yet the lower portion of the banister is much more tapered and lacks the cusps that enliven the silhouette of other chairs. The front seat rail is also more deeply undercut, and the central pendant forms a strong vertical axis. Thus the chairmaker emphasized the tall and narrow qualities of the design, as opposed to more fully developed chairs in the Rococo style, in which horizontal elements prevail and create a greater sense of stability. As with the following

chair, the beaded outer edge of the stiles and the carved shell on the crest rail were stylish options that would have cost extra. Though plain by comparison with Pendleton's heavily carved side chairs, both types probably coexisted in the same Philadelphia houses.
TSM



108

SIDE CHAIR, 1750–85 (one of a pair)
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Walnut; yellow-poplar. $40\frac{3}{8} \times 22\frac{1}{2} \times 22\frac{1}{2} \times 17$ (seat height)
Gift of the Estate of Mrs. Gustav Radeke.
31.127

Condition:
Refinished on the recommendation of John Maxon in 1946. The junctions of the stiles and crest rail have been cracked and repaired. The tip of the left scroll on the banister has been reattached and the upper corners of the banister restored.

A less costly alternative to side chairs with pierced banisters and carved crest rails were chairs like this one with a solid banister. This chair would not have been inexpensive, however, for the addition of claw feet and shells on the knees and crest rail cost extra. The design of the banister relates to the compass-seat chair (cat. 106) and together they demonstrate that solid and pierced banisters were equally fashionable and coexisted as design options throughout the second half of the 18th century.



The selection of a solid banister was a matter of the patron's preference and implied neither a stylistic transition in the evolutionary sense nor a stylistic regression, as is often implied in the popular literature on American furniture. Cabinetmakers such as William Savery made much plainer chairs in maple, not to mention more common rush-bottomed chairs, that are seldom examined in the broader context of one shop's total output.¹ What the solid banister and crest rail of this chair may lack in surface complexity, they gain in the strong silhouette of void and solid. The beaded edges of the stiles and crest rail are further subtle refinements that indicate the work of an accomplished craftsman.

TSM

1. See Evans 1969.

109

SIDE CHAIR, 1765–80

Attributed to Thomas Affleck (1740–1795, b. Aberdeen, Scotland; fl. Philadelphia, 1763–95)

Mahogany; pine. 37½ x 22½ x 17½ x 15½ (seat height)

Bequest of Charles L. Pendleton. 04.127

Publications:

Lockwood 1904, p. 416; Salomonsky 1931, pl. 24; Landman 1975, p. 928.

In the first edition of *The Gentleman and Cabinetmaker's Director*, published in 1754, Thomas Chippendale offered "the most elegant and useful designs of household furniture in the Gothic, Chinese, and Modern taste." Of all the furniture in the Pendleton collection, no other example exhibits all three of these popular mid-18th-century design motifs. The banister and crest rail are carved with ruffled, asymmetrical scrolls in the French Rococo or "modern" taste. The front seat rail is carved with a blind octagonal fret in the more exotic Chinese taste, and the front legs are embellished with lancets and quatrefoils in the "gothick" taste.

Several other side and armchairs, tables, and the magnificent Chew family sofa made for Governor John Penn (1729–1795) with similar fretwork and Marlborough legs have been attributed to Thomas Affleck, a Scottish-born Quaker cabinetmaker who had worked in Edinburgh and London before immigrating to Philadelphia in 1763.¹ Although little

is known of his earlier life and work abroad, the furniture made by his probable master, Alexander Peter, at Dumfries House in Scotland reveals the stylistic context in which Affleck was working just prior to his arrival in Philadelphia. A set of mahogany side chairs made in 1759 with Marlborough legs and "carving on the front and feet" and a related sideboard table "cut with fret on the feet and rails" are strikingly similar to Affleck's work in Philadelphia shortly afterward.² A set of 19th-century reproduction chairs nearly identical to this one that are privately owned in Scotland further strengthens the attribution.³

Affleck owned a copy of the third (1762) edition of Chippendale's *Director*, in which several designs for chairs with straight legs and fretwork appear in plates 25–28. He may have helped popularize the straight-legged "Marlborough" style in Philadelphia, where it was not common before his arrival, although there were other London-trained cabinetmakers, carvers, gilders, and upholsterers working in Philadelphia in the 1760s who also could have been familiar with Chippendale's designs (Carson

1968, pp. 187–89). John Folsom, for example, designed the Speaker's chair in Independence Hall with similar blind fretwork (Hornor 1935, pl. 97). Nevertheless, on the basis of Affleck's documented work for the Penn family and his close ties with the Quaker community of Philadelphia, furniture with Marlborough legs or gothic fretwork has traditionally been attributed to him.

The Roman numeral "vi" carved into the front seat rail of the RISD chair indicates that it once belonged to a set of at least six, of which no others are known with this same arrangement of fretwork. A second chair with similar Chinese, French, and Gothic motifs may represent the work of another shop (Comstock 1962, no. 270). The unusually low proportions of this chair have led experts to believe that it has been cut down.⁴ While the similar fretwork on the two Penn chairs does extend an inch or so lower, the stretchers on the RISD chair occur at the normal height (3¾"), suggesting that it may have been made intentionally low as a parlor chair.

TSM



1. See Hornor 1935, pls. 258–60; three chairs and a card table from the Reginald Lewis collection, Parke-Bernet sale 2026 (March 24–25, 1961), lots 119, 245 (now at the Henry Ford Museum), and 251; a card table that belonged to Benjamin Rush (*Antiques*, v. 109 [January 1976], p. 9); and another card table with the same fretwork as the Chew sofa (*Antiques*, v. 78 [September 1960], p. 186). For a biography of Affleck, see PMA 1976, pp. 98–99.
2. Bamford 1983, p. 98, pls. 2–5; Bamford 1973, pp. 81–85, pls. 13, 14.
3. See letter to the author, with photographs, in object file.
4. Notes by Luke Vincent Lockwood, John Maxon, Joseph Downs, and David Stockwell, in object file.

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SIDE CHAIR, 1755–80 (one of a set of five)
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Mahogany; yellow-poplar. 40½ x 24 x 17 x 17 (seat height)
Bequest of Charles L. Pendleton. 04.113

Publications:

Lockwood 1904, pl. 4; Nutting 1928, no. 4959; Comstock 1962, no. 264; Cooper 1980, p. 188, fig. 206; Landman 1975, p. 933 and cover.

One of a matched set of five, this is one of the most sumptuous Philadelphia side chairs in the Rococo style. Very few other Philadelphia chairs rival its scale or the richness of its carving. It is probably a product of the same shop or carver who made the following chair, also from a larger set now dispersed. The carving on both is nearly identical except for

the area of the banister directly below the central shell. It relates closely to the carving on chairs that descended in the Morris and Hollingsworth families of Philadelphia and have been traditionally attributed to Thomas Affleck (Hornor 1935, pl. 220).

More than one Philadelphia shop produced chairs similar to these. A second set (State Department) with related carving was made for Vincent Lookerman of Dover, Delaware, and has been attributed to the shop of Benjamin Randolph (Sack 3, pp. 616–17). In addition, the large number of Philadelphia side and armchairs with the same overall design and minor variations in their carved decoration indicate how popular this model must have been among a few wealthy Philadelphia families.¹

Several aspects of this chair make it more massive and elaborate than most of the related examples. For example, the crest rail lacks the small pierced area and the five-petal flower below the carved shell. Instead, acanthus foliage springs laterally from the base of the shell, and a second sprig of acanthus hangs down where the banisters on the other chairs are pierced. Even more unusual is the rocaile carving on the knees that extends over the corner of the seat frame like greaves, or the detachable knee coverings on a few contemporary Massachusetts bedsteads.² This extra area of carving visually unites the legs with the chair frame and also creates a lively sense of organic growth. The upper edge of the shoe that houses the banister is carved with alternating leaves and darts in a more classical manner.

The carved shell at the center of the front seat rail is remarkable for its baroque irregularity. In contrast to the large, crisp shell on the crest rail, this one is concave and voluptuous, although basically symmetrical. By appearing to sink below the surface of the front rail, it calls attention to the richness of the imported mahogany and matches the vitality of the rocaile carving on the knees. The small scrolls at the base of the shell repeat the double scrolls of the adjoining knee brackets, just as the upper shell complements the pronounced shells at either extremity of the crest rail.

It is unfortunate that nothing is known of the original owner or the architectural setting for which these chairs were intended. In addition to the quality of their construction and carving, their size and mass give some hint of the rich context of a prosperous mid-18th century Philadelphia townhouse. For Pendleton,



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too, these chairs must have represented the ultimate expression of English Georgian taste by an American craftsman.

TSM

1. See, for example, a chair formerly in the Reifsnnyder Collection, now at the Wadsworth Atheneum (1920.968); two in the Karolik Collection (Hipkiss 1941, cats. 83, 84); and one at Winterthur (Downs 1952, no. 127).
2. See, for example, Fales 1976, no. 208; Mrs. George Maurice Morris collection, Christie's sale 5262 (January 22, 1983), lot 329; Heckscher 1985, cat. 91.

111

SIDE CHAIR, 1755–80
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Walnut; yellow-poplar. 40½ x 23½ x 17
x 17¾ (seat height)
Bequest of Charles L. Pendleton. 04.064

Publications:

Lockwood 1904, pl. 4; Kirk 1972, p. 80;
Landman 1975, p. 928.

This chair belonged to a larger set of at least ten or twelve (depending upon how one reads the Roman numeral "ix" on the seat frame), now dispersed. It is constructed in the same manner as the chairs in the preceding set and was probably carved by the same craftsman. The carving of their scrollwork banisters, for example, is nearly identical down to the scored lines that define each acanthus frond. The leaves along this chair's crest rail, on the other hand, are broader and less sinuous. Nevertheless, tracings of their crest and seat rails match each other, providing strong evidence that they were made in the same shop or even laid out with the same template.

Like the preceding chair and a few other closely related examples, this chair has been attributed to Thomas Affleck, based on Hornor's attribution of a related set that descended in the Morris and Hollingsworth families of Philadelphia (Hornor 1935, pl. 220). Other related chairs made for the Loockerman family of Delaware have been attributed to Benjamin Randolph; other cabinetmakers and carvers undoubtedly also produced chairs in this popular pattern.¹

On this chair, the inverted shell on the seat rail, a reduced version of the one on the crest rail, is convex in the traditional manner. The acanthus carving is restricted to the legs, and the scrolls on the knee brackets are smaller and less

bold than on the preceding set. The upper scroll, for example, barely interrupts the contour of the knee block, whereas the carver of the previous chair exaggerated the scrolls to form a striking silhouette.

One puzzling detail of this chair's ornament also occurs on the preceding set, as well as on the Loockerman set. Four small knobs, one at the top of each stile and one above them at each end of the crest rail, are carved from the solid but resemble the pins used to secure a mortise and tenon joint. Yet even if they performed a structural function on this chair, they would not have been necessary on both sides of the joint, nor would an 18th-century cabinetmaker have been likely to call attention to the chair's construction or to compromise the seamless juncture of the stiles and crest rail. Whether they were an anachronistic expression of an underlying joint or a

purely ornamental device to fill the void between the fluting on the stiles and the carved ears of the crest rail, they are difficult to reconcile with the rest of the ornamental program on these exceptionally sophisticated chairs.

TSM

1. The Loockerman chair appears in Sack 3, pp. 616–17. A chair at the Metropolitan Museum numbered "x" is evidently from the same set as the RISD chair (Heckscher 1985, cat. 48), as are other chairs from the Howard Reifsnnyder collection, AAA (April 24–27, 1929), lot 646, and in *Antiques*, v. 90 (December 1966), p. 749. Related chairs that combine elements of this and the preceding set are at the MFA (Hipkiss 1941, cats. 83, 84) and at Yale (Kane 1976, no. 113).



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112

112

SIDE CHAIR, 1765–90 (one of a pair)
Boston-Salem area, Massachusetts
Mahogany; maple, pine. $37\frac{1}{2} \times 23\frac{1}{4} \times$
 $17\frac{1}{2} \times 16\frac{1}{2}$ (seat height)
Bequest of Commander William Davis
Miller. 59.254.1

Provenance:

Possibly Thomas Mawney Potter (1814–1890) of Kingston, Rhode Island; to his sister, Mary E. Potter (d. 1901); to her nephew, James Brown Mason Potter, Jr. (d. 1916); to his wife, Isabella L. Potter; upon her death in 1926, sold at auction in Kingston by Henry W. Cooke Co., (June 8–9, 1927), lot 157 or 158, where purchased by Potter's cousin, the donor

Publication:

Kirk 1972, p. 39, fig. 28.

A common Rococo chair-back design on American chairs in the Chippendale style consists of four interlaced scrolls flowing from the lines of the crest rail. Compared to the Philadelphia chairs in the Museum's collection on which the lines of upper and lower halves are well inte-

grated, the scrollwork on this Massachusetts chair appears to rest on a separate pedestal. The cusps at the top of its three pierced openings transform them into attenuated trefoils in the manner of Gothic tracery, a crucial component of the Anglo-American Rococo style and a motif that remained popular on chair-backs well into the age of Neo-classicism. This particular design, while not in any of the major pattern books of the 18th century, derives directly from English prototypes.¹ In this country, it seems to have been most popular in Massachusetts, although variations have been attributed to Connecticut and Rhode Island on the basis of ownership.²

Several unusual features of this chair, such as the scalloped front seat rail, stump rear legs, rounded seat corners, and the style of carving on the legs, differ from most other Massachusetts chairs of the same date and have led experts to attribute this chair and others like it variously to Portsmouth, New Hampshire, England, and the West Indies (Kaye 1978, p. 1099). The use of maple for the rear seat rail and the bracing of the seat frame with large triangular

corner blocks are nevertheless consistent with other chairs made in eastern Massachusetts.

Several related chairs have either sharply pointed knees or raised pad feet with scratch carving, details associated with Essex County workmanship.³ A chair at Yale is one of the few chairs with the same banister design that also has a scalloped front seat rail, a detail that occasionally occurs on Boston chairs in the Chippendale style but more often on those with pad feet and plain knees.⁴ The shaping of this seat rail, more complex than that on Queen Anne-style chairs, and the rounded front corners create a very different appearance from the taut angularity typical of Massachusetts chairs of the same date (cats. 113, 115). The symmetrical acanthus carving on the knees stands in relatively high relief and is also less angular and linear than the carving on most other Boston chairs. However, the punch work that fills the voids between carved areas on the legs was a technique commonly used by Boston ornamental carvers.

The Roman numeral "vi" and an old label on the rear seat rail inscribed "JBMP Jr." indicate that this chair, originally from a set of at least six, belonged to James Brown Mason Potter, Jr. and probably formed part of the collection assembled by his uncle Thomas Mawney Potter in the mid-19th century. This pair of chairs was one of three pairs that were listed in the front parlor of the Potter house in Kingston, Rhode Island, when its contents were sold at auction in 1927. TSM

1. See Warwick 1929, p. 213; *Antiques*, v. 96 (October 1969), p. 473; and Kirk 1977, fig. 865.
2. See Nutting 1928, no. 2166 and Fales 1976, nos. 88, 89. For related chairs attributed to Rhode Island, see Christie's sale (March 10, 1978), lot 145; *Antiques*, v. 88 (August 1965), p. 161. For another attributed to Connecticut, see AAA-Anderson sale 3890 (February 21, 1931), lot 131.
3. See Jobe and Kaye 1984, fig. 114a; AAA sale 3937 (December 17–19, 1931), lot 588; and a pair of chairs that belonged to Artemas Ward of Shrewsbury, AAA-Anderson sale 3908 (April 17–18, 1931), lot 337.
4. In addition to the Yale chair (1950.715), see *Antiques*, v. 40 (July 1941), back cover.



113

SIDE CHAIR, 1760–85 (one of a pair)
Boston, Massachusetts
Mahogany, pine. $37\frac{1}{2} \times 22 \times 17\frac{1}{2}$ (seat height)
Bequest of Marshall H. Gould. 44.038

Provenance:

Said to have belonged to John Hancock; purchased at auction by Frederick Gould, Boston; to his son, Frederick L. Gould; to his wife, Elizabeth Angell Gould (d. 1907); to her son, the donor

Publications:

Kirk 1972, p. 106, fig. 117; Kirk 1977, fig. 999.

Condition:

Cleaned and refinished. The corner blocks and inner angle irons are not original. The rear knee bracket of the right front leg has been replaced. The Roman numeral “I” has been cut in the top edge of the front seat rail, and “V” on the inner face of the front seat rail and loose seat frame.

Like the “owl’s eye” banister design of cat. 116, the interlaced diamond and



Fig. 113a

Side chair, English, ca. 1760. Mahogany. $37\frac{3}{4} \times 23 \times 23\frac{3}{4}$ (seat height). Bequest of Charles L. Pendleton. 04.130

figure-eight within a vase shape was one of the most popular New England chair-back designs in the second half of the 18th century. Judging from the number that survive, chairs of this pattern and a minor variant were especially popular in eastern Massachusetts, although examples from New York, Pennsylvania, and the South are also known.¹ No direct source for this chair-back appears in any of the English printed pattern books of the time. Nevertheless, numerous English and Continental versions attest to its widespread popularity (see cat. 114).

Compared to Philadelphia chairs or more elaborate English chairs (fig. a), the carved decoration on these Boston chairs is flat and abstract. The drapery swag and tassel clearly articulated on the English chair are here reduced to semi-circular gouges and simple outlines of the forms. The American carver has

expressed the interwoven, overlapping lines of the diamond and figure eight but chose not to add the volutes to the strapwork that would have added a sense of volume to an otherwise planar design. Together with the narrow seat rails and sharp knees that are characteristic of Massachusetts chairs, these features account for the lean and taut appearance of these chairs, so different from their more massive European counterparts.

Comparison with related Massachusetts chairs reveals many of the options that 18th-century patrons could select within the same basic chair pattern. A chair at SPNEA (Jobe and Kaye 1984, no. 114) is alike in every detail except that the SPNEA chair is upholstered over the rails. Another chair at Harvard (Fogg 1972, no. 168) and one at the Metropolitan Museum (Heckscher 1985, cat. 11) lack the optional carving on the knees but do have the added luxury of stop-fluted stiles. Others at Yale (Kane 1976, cat. 100) and the DAR Museum (Garrett 1985, p. 121) have carved knees, plain stiles, and a carved lunette on the crest rail. A chair at the Essex Institute (Jobe and Kaye 1984, fig. 114a) has unusual pad feet, stop-fluted stiles, and a seat upholstered over the rails, whereas a close variant has pad feet but plain stiles and a loose seat.²

Like the chair at the DAR Museum, this chair was originally owned by John Hancock. In 1926, the donor wrote that it had been purchased by his grandfather at a sale of Hancock’s furniture in Boston. The contents of the celebrated Hancock House at the top of Beacon Hill had been sold sporadically by the heirs at seven public auctions, beginning in 1793 and culminating in the final sale in 1863 at which interior and exterior architectural fragments were dispersed.³ Sprague and Tappan, auctioneers, emphasized the house’s great age and its “Revolutionary fame,” while the lure of the “many antique curiosities and materials to be fashioned into many useful and ornamental parlor mementoes” proved irresistible to Victorian antiquarians.

TSM

1. Kane 1976, nos. 99, 101; Hornor 1935, nos. 337, 339; and Elder 1976, p. 121. Nutting 1928, no. 2196 is erroneously cited as belonging to RISD.
2. Hyman Kaufman collection, AAA sale 4100 (April 12–21, 1934), lot 429.
3. See Swan 1937, pp. 119–21.

SIDE CHAIR, 1770–90 (one of four)
Probably English; possibly Virginia or the Carolinas

Mahogany; *syvestris* pine. 35½ x 21 x 14½ (seat height)

Gift of Edward B. Aldrich. 51.135

Provenance:

Said to have belonged to the Worthington family of Virginia who moved to western Maryland prior to 1790; to Francis Hill Bigelow, Boston, before 1909; sold at auction of his collection, Anderson Galleries sale 1795, part I (1924), lot 131 (as a set of six), where purchased by the donor, Edward B. Aldrich of Providence

Exhibitions:

Hudson-Fulton Exhibition, Metropolitan Museum, 1909, cat. 151; *Retrospective Exhibition of the Decorative Arts*, Copley Society, Boston, 1911, no. 596; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 1912.

Publication:

Museum Notes, RISD, May 1958, p. 7.

Few items in this catalogue have been more widely exhibited or can boast a more distinguished provenance, and yet the place of origin of these chairs remains uncertain. Puzzled by their size, proportions, and the alleged presence of spruce as a secondary wood, curators over the years have attributed them variously to Virginia, Boston, England, and Portugal.¹ Their size is easily accounted for by their likely use in a parlor or bed chamber, where chair seats were customarily lower than those of dining chairs. Their history of ownership by the Worthington family of Virginia and Maryland is less certain, since it is first mentioned in the 1924 auction catalogue of the Francis Hill Bigelow collection. Because wealthy Virginians frequently imported their furniture directly from England, and because *syvestris* pine is commonly found on English furniture but unlikely to occur in American furniture made south of Boston, these chairs are often assumed to be English.

Given their Virginia history, it is tempting to assert that these chairs were made in the South. Stylistically, they are not unlike chairs made in Tidewater Virginia and the Carolinas. For example, an armchair attributed to Norfolk, Virginia also has a broad banister with a similar interlaced diamond and figure eight pattern, in addition to squared back posts (Gusler 1979, p. 157). Both features derive from English sources and occur on other chairs made in the British



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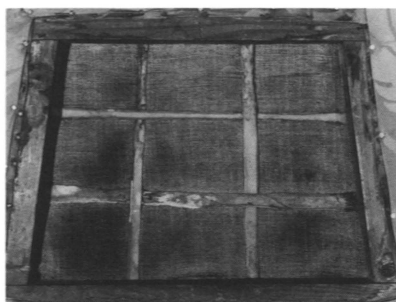


Fig. 114a

colonies (cat. 113). The peculiar webbing of the loose seats on this set consists of rawhide strips nailed to the pine seat frame, an unusual technique for an English chair but one that does occur on turned chairs made in the South Carolina Piedmont (fig. a).²

A less tangible aspect of these chairs that suggests Southern workmanship is their overall plainness, a desirable

feature among wealthy buyers in the South. When Peter Manigault, one of Charleston's wealthiest planters, ordered furniture and other household items from England, he wanted them "the plainer the better so that they are fashionable..." (Trent 1985a, p. 19). His comment indicates that in Southern society, plainness was perceived as an asset, a stylish quality rather than an indication of lesser means. A second wealthy patron who deliberately sought plain furniture was Charles Carroll of Maryland, whose accounts with his London agents are filled with instructions similar to Manigault's for furniture "of a solid kind" and with "no superfluous carving about them."³ "Neat and plain" designs were likewise favored by Virginia patrons before the Revolution.

The RISD chairs may also be this same kind of English chair without extensive carving, ordered from London by a

member of the Worthington family. In addition to the use of sylvestris pine and the design of the banister and squared posts, other stylistic features suggest a possible English origin. The volutes that extend vertically from the stiles are much more typical of English chairs than American chairs, on which the volutes tend to be horizontal extensions of the crest rail.⁴ A group of chairs with similar volutes made in Norwich, Connecticut, were probably inspired by chairs made in London for export to provincial areas of England and to the colonies, where they were especially popular in Pennsylvania, Virginia, and South Carolina.⁵ Both this set and the Norwich chairs rely on a strong silhouette instead of elaborate carving for their visual impact. An even plainer joined side chair in the Charleston Museum (Burton 1955, fig. 112) has a related banister but straight legs and probably represents a South Carolina-made version of comparable chairs imported from London.

The similarities between chairs produced so far apart suggest a common model, which may have been an English chair similar to this one. Regardless of its nationality, this chair confirms a poorly documented aspect of simple English furniture that was made for export to provincial English markets and widely imitated in Portugal, Brazil, and in the American colonies from New England to the Carolinas.

TSM

1. This banister design was popular in Portugal as well as in Brazil, although Chippendale-style chairs from those countries tend to be much more elaborately carved than these chairs and are frequently made of rosewood. See Robert C. Smith, *The Art of Portugal, 1500–1800* (New York: Meredith Press, 1968), p. 305, fig. 250. For similar Brazilian designs, see Tilde Canti, *O Movel no Brasil* (Rio de Janeiro: Candido Guinle de Paula Machado, 1985), figs. 242–45, 313.
2. Letter from Bradford Rauschenburg, MESDA, 1985.
3. William Voss Elder III, “The Carroll Family: An English Lifestyle in America,” in Baltimore Museum of Art, *“Anywhere So Long as There be Freedom.” Charles Carroll of Carrollton, His Family and his Maryland* (Baltimore, 1975), pp. 277–78.
4. See, for example, Kirk 1982, figs. 841, 864, 875.
5. Trent 1985a, p. 18; see also Winters 1977, p. 16.



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SIDE CHAIR, 1760–1800
Essex County, Massachusetts
Yellow birch; Eastern white pine,
chestnut. 37¼ x 23¼ x 21 x 16¾ (seat
height)

Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Joseph K. Ott.
84.212.2

Publication:
Museum Notes, RISD, 1985, p. 23.

Craftsmen who sold elaborately carved and upholstered custom-made chairs, known as “bespoke work,” also made much simpler chairs. Less elaborate chairs such as this one could be purchased directly off the floor of urban cabinetmakers’ showrooms and should not be interpreted as products of less able or “country” craftsmen. Although constructed of inexpensive local woods, this side chair was undoubtedly once stained to imitate more expensive walnut and mahogany chairs. Its molded seat rails, sharply pointed knees, raised pad feet and cabriole legs without stretchers are all features associated with the most stylish chairs made in Salem and Boston. The use of birch and the absence of carving made this plain chair less expensive but equally suitable for wealthy and

middle-class customers alike. For example, the prosperous Williams family of Deerfield owned chairs like this one, as well as compass-seat chairs from Boston and Newport (Fales 1976, no. 109).

This particular banister design, consisting of pierced “lancets” above a gothic quatrefoil, is often associated with high-style chairs made in New York but also occurs on many plain chairs with histories of ownership in the Salem area of Massachusetts.¹ Similar chairs were also common in rural Britain (Kirk 1982, pp. 264–65). The simply pierced banister reflects the long-lived popularity of the Chippendale style in America, where complex banister designs were distilled by both urban and rural New England craftsmen for easy replication from a template.

TSM

1. See Kirk 1982, no. 917; Levy 1984, p. 13. For chairs with Essex County histories, see Jobe and Kaye 1984, cats. 124–25. Unlike the SPNEA chair no. 124, the shoe, banister, and crest rail on this chair are three separate pieces, indicating the work of a different shop.

CHAMBER ARMCHAIR, 1780–1800
Probably Providence, Rhode Island
Birch; chestnut. 40 x 23 x 18 x 14½ (seat height)

Gift of Miss Elizabeth Hazard. 76.193

Provenance:

Probably owned by Daniel Paine (1809–1866), Providence; to his daughter, Mrs. Frederick M. Sackett (Emma Louisa Paine) (1842–1922), Providence, the grandmother of the donor

Publication:

Monkhouse 1980, p. 129.

Condition:

The chair was refinished before it came to the Museum. The rush seat has been replaced.

Derived from English chairs, the design of the banister or splat on this armchair is graphically described today as an “owl’s-eye” splat. On Chippendale-style chairs made in Massachusetts it outdistanced all other patterns in popularity, and frequently appears on Rhode Island chairs as well (Jobe and Kaye 1984, p. 381). A set of chairs with the owl’s-eye banister ascribed to the Providence shop of Grindal Rawson and Joseph Rawson, Sr., has been published (Monahan 1980, p. 136).

While the RISD chair has no known connection with the Rawsons, it does have a long history of ownership in Providence by the Sackett family. Frederick Sackett, a successful woolen manufacturer, married Emma L. Paine in 1866, and the chair might well have

come into the Sackett family through her. In the same year as their marriage, an inventory was made of the contents of the house at the corner of Washington and Greene Streets in Providence occupied by Emma Paine Sackett’s parents, Daniel and Louisa D. Paine, where “1 sick chair 5.00” is listed.¹ That description fits the RISD chair, because underneath its low rush slip seat is a pan frame with circular cutout for a commode. The frame is made of chestnut, a wood often used by Rhode Island cabinetmakers in both the 18th and the 19th centuries.

The famous Providence merchant, John Brown, also owned a sick chair or close stool of birch which can be profitably compared with the RISD example (Ott 1975, p. 951). The design of the back of John Brown’s chair has been brought up-to-date, with Chippendale’s designs superseded by a preference for Hepplewhite and Sheraton. In the process the owl’s-eye splat was replaced by a reticulated banister incorporating a classical urn. Similar adjustments were made in the design of the crest rail, most noticeably in the elimination of the scrolled ears found on the RISD chair. Otherwise, the chairs have much in common, including their shaped arms and beaded moldings along the exposed edges of their stretchers, not to mention chestnut pan frames below their removable rush seats. The John Brown chair still retains its original mahoganzed finish over the birch, suggesting that the RISD chair might have been treated similarly before its surface was refinished. Therefore, in view of their related histories, design, and construction, it is very possible that these two chairs were not only made in Providence, but also in the same unidentified shop.

CPM

1. Daniel Paine’s inventory, Inventory Book, v. 15, p. 396, City of Providence Probate.



SIDE CHAIR, 1790–1810 (one of a pair)
Probably Providence, Rhode Island
Mahogany, maple. 39½ x 21½ x 18 x
17½ (seat height)
Bequest of Miss Emily Spaulding. 32.138

Condition:

Rear corner blocks have been added. The left half of the right swag in the banister has been replaced. Holes in the rear seat rail from earlier upholstery have been filled.

Before the appearance in 1976 of two chairs with shield backs and kylix banisters, bearing the label of John Carlile and Sons of Providence, such chairs had been variously attributed to Newport, Providence, Boston, and Salem (cat. 118) and associated with several craftsmen, including the Goddards of Newport, Job Danforth of Providence, Benjamin Frothingham of Charlestown, and Samuel McIntire of Salem.¹ Since the appearance of the labeled Carlile chairs, however, this design can now be linked to at least one specific shop in Providence.²

John Carlile (1727–1796) was a native of Boston who was working in Providence by the 1750s. With his six sons, Thomas (1754–1785), John Jr. (1762–1832), Benjamin Franklin (1766–1800), William (1768–after 1824), Samuel (1770–after 1838), and Joseph (1777–1800), the Carliles produced a wide variety of chairs, tables (see cat. 66), case furniture, and coffins. As with many 18th-century craftsmen, the Carliles gradually turned to more lucrative mercantile pursuits and by the 1830s were advertising only the sale of lumber.³ With success came civic and fraternal obligations. Carlile served as representative to the Rhode Island General Assembly from 1801 to 1802, as a member of the Providence Town Council from 1818 to 1824, on the Providence School Committee, and as Grand Master of Masons from 1817 to 1824.

Surviving bills from other Providence craftsmen suggest that even though the chairs bear the label of John Carlile, Sr., they were more likely the work of John Jr., active from the 1780s onward. Like the labeled chairs, the RISD examples have maple rails, exposed tenons at the back of the stiles, open braces at the corners of the seat frame, and medial stretchers tenoned to the side stretchers. The construction and the quality of carved and molded decoration set these chairs apart from other examples that

may also have been made in Providence but in different shops.⁴ Differences include the carving of the plume and its base, the kylix and its fluted stem, the swags and rosettes, the lunette at the base of the shield, and the molded face of the shield-back. Other versions of this chair have thinner rails and legs, corner blocks instead of cross braces, blind tenons, dovetailed medial stretchers, and chamfered rear legs. The transition of the stiles from square to round is also less abrupt on the Carlile-type chairs than on other similar chairs and occurs at a lower point, just above the seat.

For patrons who preferred a more traditional chair design to the latest shield-back models, pedestal-back chairs were also available in the same pattern.⁵ The large number of surviving chairs of both types attests to their widespread manufacture in Rhode Island, where they were by far the most popular chair design in the Neo-classical era.

TSM



1. For chairs of this type attributed to Goddard and Enge, see Nutting 1928, no. 2339. The case for Job Danforth appears in Pillsbury 1972, p. 87. The Frothingham example appears in Sack, *Fine Points*, pp. 54–55. The drawing of a chair back by Samuel McIntire at the Essex Institute is illustrated in Hipkiss 1941, supplement no. 102.
2. The two recently published labeled chairs are both privately owned. One is in the collection of Mr. and Mrs. Joseph K. Ott (*Antiques*, v. 121, [May 1982], p. 1156). A mate is in the collection of Mr. and Mrs. Stanley Stone (Rodriguez Roque 1984, no. 68). A third is illustrated in *Antiques*, v. 117 (June 1980), p. 1146. A long-overlooked pair of labeled Carlile chairs has been at Amherst College since 1951 (Shepard 1978, p. 246).
3. The most complete biography of the Carliles is Joseph K. Ott, "Lesser-Known Rhode Island Cabinet-makers: The Carliles, Holmes Weaver, Judson Blake, The Rawsons, and Thomas Davenport," *Antiques*, v. 121 (May 1982), pp. 1156–57. See also Rowe 1924, pp. 310–311.
4. A chair at Winterthur, for example (Montgomery 1966, no. 45), bore a piece of cloth inscribed "Chas. Burling Stevenson/Stephens & Satler Co./Providence 1810."
5. See Kane 1976, no. 139.

SIDE CHAIR, 1790–1810

Probably Salem, Massachusetts
Mahogany; beech, cherry. 37¼ x 21 x 18
x 17½ (seat height)
Bequest of Arthur B. and Martha Lisle,
by exchange. 71.077

Provenance:

Israel Sack, Inc., New York, from whom
purchased

Publication:

Sack 3, p. 690.

Condition:

Several breaks in the back have been
repaired.

The rare survival of an 18th-century drawing by Samuel McIntire of a similar chair back, as well as several actual chairs of the same design, one signed by Benjamin Frothingham of Charlestown, Massachusetts, help to identify at least two cities in which nearly identical shield-back chairs were produced.¹ Whether McIntire was inspired by the popular Rhode Island shield-back chairs with a kylix and drapery swags (cat. 117), or whether chairmakers in both regions were responding to a common source is not known. The relative rarity of Massachusetts chairs of this type and the great number of Rhode Island examples

suggest, however, that this design originated in Rhode Island and was copied in Massachusetts. Similar chair backs having a kylix within an oval appear on English chairs from the 1780s, but are not illustrated in any of the major pattern books of the period.

McIntire's drawing, tersely inscribed "chair back," was probably intended as a model for a carver or other craftsman to follow. In 1795, he billed the Salem firm of Elijah and Jacob Sanderson for "making pattern for a banister."² Other similar chair designs with urns and drapery swags are also traditionally attributed to McIntire (Hipkiss 1941, nos. 90–92). In his drawing, the kylix, swags, and rosettes are carefully delineated, whereas the ornament on the crest rail is only hinted at with loose, trailing lines. McIntire also left blank the semi-circular area at the base. It is precisely in these two areas that the greatest variation occurs on the individual chairs. On the Karolik chair and the one signed by Frothingham, sinuous vines extend almost to the edge of the shield. This treatment comes closest to the spirit of McIntire's drawing. On other variants, including the RISD chair, stalks of wheat branch out symmetrically and merge with bellflowers and kernels.

The carving at the base of the backs on the related chairs shows even greater

variation. Neither McIntire's drawing nor the Frothingham chair has any design in the semi-circular reserve. The others all have carved baskets containing fruit and branches, a motif widely associated with McIntire but evidently made by different carvers. A chair in the Karolik collection and another formerly in the Dwight Blaney collection are the most skillfully carved.³ The baskets and their overflowing contents nearly fill the space around them. Even the woven strands of the baskets are well defined. By comparison, the carving on the RISD chair and one at the Henry Ford Museum (64.27.1) is less skilled and more tentative.

Samuel McIntire was the most celebrated wood carver working in Salem at the end of the 18th century, but he was not alone. There is no doubt that he executed ornamental carving on furniture as well as the interior architectural ornament for which he is best known. In the same 1795 bill to the Sandersons cited above, McIntire itemized "cutting 6 chair backs" and "carving six chairs." Salem supported several other carvers, however, any of whom could have carved this chair. Daniel Clarke, for example, performed extensive "carving, turning, and reeding" for the Sandersons and others. In one bill, Clarke charged for having "drafted and cut the pattern, carved and made a set of Hepplewhite chairs," just as McIntire had.⁴

By the 1790s, the Sandersons in Salem, the Frothinghams in Charlestown, and other Salem and Boston shops probably had multiple contracts with several local carvers in order to maintain the high volume of their local sales and export business. At the same time, Rhode Island cabinetmakers were similarly engaged in a wide-ranging furniture export trade. It may be that this style of Massachusetts shield-back chair and its numerous Rhode Island counterparts had more in common as export wares than a strictly local interpretation of their manufacture and use would suggest.

TSM



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1. McIntire's drawing at the Essex Institute and the chair signed by Frothingham are illustrated in Sack 1950, pp. 54–55.
2. Swan 1934, p. 322.
3. The Karolik chair is illustrated in Hipkiss 1941, no. 102; the Blaney chair was sold at Parke-Bernet, sale 2466 (October 22, 1966), lot 157.
4. Swan 1934, pp. 335–41.

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SIDE CHAIR, 1790–1815

Rhode Island

Mahogany; maple, pine. $40\frac{1}{2} \times 21 \times 18 \times 17\frac{1}{2}$ (seat height)

Gift of the Estate of Mrs. Gustav Radeke.

31.132

Condition:

The banister has cracked and been mended in several areas. It has pulled away from the crest rail at either side, and been nailed at the base where it passes behind the shoe. Iron braces have been added to the tops of all four legs.

The tall back of this side chair, its serpentine stiles, and banister anchored in a shoe at the base are all features that hark back to traditional chair designs from the mid-18th century, even though the kylix and swags are decidedly Neo-classical in derivation. No source for this chair appears in either Hepplewhite's or Sheraton's pattern books. The shape of the back, on the other hand, is illustrated in the *London Chair-Makers' and Carvers' Book of Prices for Workmanship* of 1802 and is called a "pedestal back" (Montgomery 1966, no. 42).



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Related pedestal-back chairs have been attributed to Job Danforth of Providence on the basis of their descent in the cabinetmaker's family (Pillsbury 1972, p. 86). As with the Carlile type shield-back chairs (cat. 117), however, such chairs were probably made in many other shops in Providence as well as in Newport.

Pendant leaves and husks often appear as inlaid ornament on Federal-period furniture but seldom at this exaggerated scale, which is more reminiscent of pierced banisters in the Chippendale style. Other variations of this chair design exist with crossed ribs in place of the kylix and swags, but they were evidently less popular, judging from their rarity today.¹ Considered together with cat. 117, this chair and the following example represent the wide range of Neo-classical design options, from the conservative to the avant-garde, that were favored by Rhode Islanders at the turn of the 19th century.

TSM

1. Sack 1950, p. 52.

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SIDE CHAIR, 1790–1810

Rhode Island

Mahogany; pine. $38 \times 20\frac{1}{2} \times 17 \times 17$ (seat height)

Gift of Miss Elizabeth Hazard. 76.194

Provenance:

Descended in the family of Frederick Sackett, Providence, to the donor

Condition:

Four new corner blocks have been added, and the loose seat frame has been replaced.

Pedestal-back chairs of this type were made in great numbers throughout Connecticut and Rhode Island. The problem of isolating specific regional characteristics remains unresolved, although the names of several craftsmen have been linked to individual examples. Most Connecticut attributions rely on a set of six cherry parlor chairs that were made in 1793 by the Hartford cabinet-making firm of Kneeland and Adams.¹ Similar chairs made of birch and mahogany have also been attributed to three Rhode Island chairmakers: Robert Sterry Burrough and John Carlile of Provi-



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dence, and Thomas Goddard of Newport. The donor of this chair said that it had always been referred to in her family as the "Carlile chair."²

As with the Rhode Island chamber chair (cat. 116), the simple joined construction of the frame and sawing out of the banister required few specialized skills. The molding along the upper edges of the seat rails and stretchers and the molded front legs are the only decorative additions. The urns on the backs of similar chairs are often carved, some more recently than others. As in the 18th century, some 20th-century dealers admit that it was common practice in the trade to recarve a plain chair, thus making unaltered chairs like this one valuable records of the simple furniture that has few counterparts from the Federal period outside of Rhode Island and Connecticut. Such chairs could be the work of either urban cabinetmakers or rural joiners, and may have been inspired by similarly plain English designs.³

The RISD chair differs slightly from the Hartford and other Rhode Island examples of the form. For example, the outermost ribs of the banister meet at the top rather than ending in volutes at either side. The resulting mass beneath the arch of the crest rail makes the chair appear heavier than most. On the other hand, the continuation of the slender ribs to the very bottom of the back is more elegant than the tall shoe seen on many other chairs.

A simplified banister cut from a template required significantly less time to execute than the carved kylix, plumes, swags, rosettes, and molded stiles on the previous three chairs (cats. 117–119). Its visual impact derives from the silhouette of its slender parts rather than the tactile appeal of well-carved emblems of classical antiquity. Ironically, this same sense of abstraction and austerity comes closest to the Neo-classical ideal, yet the most appealing aspect of this chair to its original owner was undoubtedly its relatively low cost.

TSM

1. See Richards 1968, p. 9; Montgomery 1966, no. 41.
2. See Ott 1965, no. 16; Rowe 1924, p. 311; Swan 1950, p. 449. Other similar chairs owned and probably made in Rhode Island include a set that once belonged to Sullivan Dorr of Providence (private collection) and a set of eight attributed to Thomas Goddard that belonged to Governor Joseph Wanton, illustrated in *Antiques*, v. 29 (April 1936), p. 158.
3. For an English example, see Helen Maggs Fede, *Washington Furniture at Mount Vernon* (Mount Vernon, Va.: The Mount Vernon Ladies Memorial Association of the Union, 1966), p. 55.

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ARMCHAIR, 1790–1815 (with six matching side chairs)
Probably New York City
Mahogany with light wood inlay; maple, pine. 38 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 24 x 19 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 16 $\frac{1}{4}$ (seat height)
Gift of the Estate of Mrs. Gustav Radeke.
31.140

Provenance:
Acquired before 1921 by Mrs. Radeke and evidently used in her own house on Prospect Street, Providence

Condition:
Both arms have been refastened at the stiles and the holes crudely filled. The left front quarter-round corner block is missing, and iron braces have been added in three corners.

By 1800, furniture made in American port cities was widely exchanged and easily dispersed to expanding inland markets. This, and the variety of design options available on Federal-period furniture often make it difficult to attribute chairs to a specific region without a maker's label or a specific



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provenance. Nevertheless, certain designs do seem to have been more popular in one region than another. For example, chairs of this design were especially popular in New York, as were close variants with plumes or fans instead of paterae on the central banister (see cat. 122). Because a side chair with a similar shield back appears in the engraved label of Elbert Anderson, a New York City cabinetmaker, for many years such chairs were attributed to him.¹ That other shops in New York were also producing similar chairs is indicated by the number of variations in their construction and ornament, many of which are set forth in New York cabinet- and chairmakers' price books.²

A comparison of several similar chairs reveals some of the possible combinations of different leg and arm designs: reeded legs with spade feet; tapered, inlaid legs with plain feet; flared, inlaid legs with inlaid whorls on the arms; flared, molded legs with carved whorls on the arms; and straight inlaid legs with inlaid whorls on the arms. A comparison of banisters reveals further variations among the paterae, volutes at the base of the shield, punchwork around the paterae, and carving on the tops of the arms and along the front of the crest rail.³

Shield-back chairs of the New York type were also occasionally made in other regions. Four of the finest examples bear the label of John Townsend of Newport and are dated 1800.⁴ Others were apparently made in Baltimore, and less closely related examples are known from the Boston-Salem area.⁵ Were it not for the manuscript labels on the Townsend chairs specifically stating that they were "made by" him, it would be tempting to claim that they were made in New York and shipped to Newport to be sold by Townsend in his shop. After all, the furniture trade between Rhode Island and New York in this period was extensive, much more so than between her New England neighbors.⁶

This chair is not labeled, nor can its ownership be traced before 1921. In terms of their additional ornament, for which the original purchaser paid extra, the RISD chairs stand somewhere below the top of the line. The legs are plain instead of molded, straight instead of "swept" (flared), the whorls and paterae are inlaid instead of carved, and there is no leaf carving on the tops of the arms as there is on the most elaborate examples (Winterthur, MMA).

TSM

1. Elbert Anderson's label appears on a sideboard sold at Sotheby's, sale 5357 (June 27–28, 1985), lot 429. See also Montgomery 1966, no. 53.
2. Montgomery 1966, pp. 101–4.
3. See chairs in the Charles Hitchcock Tyler collection, AAA sale 4018 (January 24–28, 1933), lot 1147; Louis Guerineau Myers collection, AAA (February 24–26, 1921), lot 633; Rice 1962, p. 50; MMA acc. no. 32.55.7.
4. The labeled John Townsend chairs are in the collection of Joseph K. Ott (Ott 1968, pp. 388–89); Bayou Bend (Warren 1975, no. 141); and a pair at the Winterthur Museum.
5. See Elder 1976, p. 120; Sack 7, p. 1884, and a second chair at the Henry Ford Museum attributed to the Boston-Salem area (Bishop 1972, no. 387).
6. For a history of local trade with New York, see Ott 1969, pp. 15–16.

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SIDE CHAIR, 1790–1810 (with six matching side and two armchairs)
New York City or possibly Albany, New York
Mahogany with light wood inlay; ash, cherry, birch. 36½ x 20½ x 18 x 18 (seat height)
Bequest of Susan Martin Allien, in memory of Philip Taber and Pardon Tillinghast. 35.689

Provenance:

According to tradition, descended in the Gallup family of Knox, New York; purchased by Robert C. Martin; to his daughter, Susan Martin Allien, New York, by whom bequeathed.

According to the New York chairmakers' price book of 1802, chairs of this kind were known as "square-back" and consisted of "a drapery banister, with feather top; a splat on each side, to form an arch with the top rail; banister and splats



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pierc'd; sweep stay and top rail, with a brake in ditto; sweep seat rails, for stuffing over ditto; plain taper'd legs."¹ The form derives directly from the 1794 edition of Sheraton's *Drawing Book* (plate 36) and, together with cats. 121 and 123, represents the most popular chair designs among wealthy New Yorkers in the Federal period.

A number of subtle variations of this square-back design exist. For example, many chairs have carved backs, whereas others with stringing and engraved inlays, as on this set, are more unusual.² Even among those with inlaid ornament, further variation exists. In the treatment of the drapery banister, for example, the swags on the RISD set do not overlap the urn or interrupt the rectangular tablet above. On related chairs in the Karolik collection, the swags overlap the urn and hang from inlaid rosettes on either side of an inlaid oval. The same chairs are also unusual for having stars inlaid within the raised central portion of the crest rail. Chairs with even more extensive inlays come closest to matching the effect of carving.³ As with other Federal-period New York chairs, other options include molded and flared front legs, carved and tapered legs with spade feet, and plain, tapered legs outlined with stringing, as on these chairs.

The uneven quality of workmanship on square-back chairs indicates that many shops must have been producing them. No signed or labeled chairs of this pattern are known, although several that have descended in prominent New York families strengthen the traditional attribution to New York City shops.⁴ Montgomery has also suggested Albany as a possible source for the pair of armchairs at Winterthur. The RISD chairs may also have been made in Albany, for they were purchased by Robert C. Martin, the donor's father, from the Gallup family of Knox, New York, a settlement about twenty miles west of Albany that the Gallups helped to establish after the end of the Revolutionary War.⁵

Within the Museum's set of nine, both armchairs and two of the side chairs are modern reproductions, probably added to the five original chairs sometime in the early 20th century in order to fill out the Martins' New York City dining room. Of the five original chairs, only one has "sweep braces" running from front to back on the seat frame, yet it is otherwise identical to the other four, which have cross braces in all four corners of their seat frames.

Susan Martin Allien, the donor, also

inherited from her parents a large collection of European porcelain, of which she bequeathed about two hundred examples to the RISD Museum. Although she never lived in Providence, the homestead of one of her ancestors, Stulkley Westcott, had stood on the site of the Museum. She evidently took pride in her other local ancestors who lie buried nearby on Benefit Street, Philip Taber and Pardon Tillinghast, among the first settlers of Providence and in whose memory she made this bequest.

TSM

1. Montgomery 1966, p. 103.
2. *Ibid.*, nos. 58–59; Hipkiss 1941, nos. 107–108; Levy 1984, pp. 30–31.
3. Hipkiss 1941, p. 108; see also a chair from the Robert Lee Gill collection, illustrated in *Antiques*, v. 111 (May 1977), p. 996, and *Antiques*, v. 71 (January 1957), p. 15.
4. Miller 1957, pp. 57–58, no. 87. See also Rice 1962, p. 46.
5. See John D. Gallup, *The Genealogical History of the Gallup Family in the United States* (Hartford: The Hartford Printing Co., 1893), pp. 54–55. A set of similar chairs appears in the Albany home of John V. L. Pruyn, as illustrated in 1876 (see Charles Wyllys Elliott, *The Book of American Interiors* [Boston: James R. Osgood and Co., 1876], pl. 9).

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SIDE CHAIR, 1790–1810
Rhode Island, or possibly New York
Mahogany. 38 x 21 x 18½ x 16
(seat height)
Gift of Henry D. Sharpe in memory of
Dr. Frank L. Day. 34.028

Provenance:
Dr. Frank L. Day (1856–1926); by
bequest to the donor

The banister of this shield-back chair combines several popular Neo-classical motifs such as a vase, swags, and plumes, that are derived from contemporary English sources and in this country are generally associated with New York City workmanship. As with the other New York chairs in the collection, this chair design was popular in other regions as well. Closely related chairs were also made in Rhode Island, Massachusetts, Connecticut, and as far away as South Carolina.¹

On the most common examples, the central rib divides into two leaf-carved

branches that support a central plume of feathers and drapery swags at either side. This chair presents a modified version of the same banister design, in which the central rib forms an attenuated vase, and instead of two leaf-carved branches, five molded ribs fan out beneath a ruffled border within the raised portion of the crest rail. The central rib terminates in a plume of overlapping water leaves, thus complementing the similarly carved lunette at the base of the shield. Additional knots of leaves on the ribs at either side of the central vase further enhance the "spiky" angularity of the chair's silhouette, which is quite different from the smooth, oval lines of other New York shield-back chairs.

Many of these same features appear on an unusual New York chair at the Winterthur Museum (Montgomery 1966, no. 56), but they are more often associated with Philadelphia and Baltimore chairs. That such diverse geographical regions shared a taste for many of the same furniture designs may be one result of the diffusion of printed pattern books, but can also be accounted for by the increase of coastal shipping and the migration of craftsmen themselves.

There has long been debate whether many of the New York-style chairs with histories of ownership in Rhode Island might have been made locally. To date there is no way to distinguish with certainty between the two. The shield-back chairs labeled and signed by John Townsend of Newport are a rare exception (see cat. 121). Exposed seat rail tenons and the absence of ash as a secondary wood have been cited in support of New England attributions for such chairs, and yet exposed tenons were listed in New York price books as an extra option, and there is no reason why New York chairmakers would not also have used other woods that were readily at hand.

An armchair attributed to Newport (Sack 7, p. 2060) has carved arms whose design is related to other Rhode Island chairs. A second set of similar chairs owned locally were, according to family tradition, made in Newport and can be documented to Rhode Island as far back as the first quarter of the 19th century. A pair of similar chairs in the Museum's collection (76.161–62) were said to have been acquired by the donor's mother in Wickford and may also have been made locally (Monkhouse 1980, p. 130). One cannot exclude, however, the possibility that such chairs were shipped from New York to be sold in Newport and Providence.



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This particular chair has the distinction of having been used in the drawing room to the right of the front hall of 72 Waterman Street, formerly the home of Charles Pendleton, which was purchased by Dr. Frank Day shortly after Pendleton's death. It is apparent from the inventory of Dr. Day's estate that he, like Pendleton, was a discerning bachelor collector of furniture and porcelains.² The room-by-room inventory of his possessions suggests that he had also furnished the house in a manner similar to Pendleton.

TSM

1. For examples from other regions see Randall 1962, no. 159 (Massachusetts); Ott 1965, no. 17 (Rhode Island); *Antiques*, v. 78 (November 1960), p. 405 (Connecticut); and Burton 1955, figs. 126–27 (Charleston). For a related English design, see Sarah C. Nichols, "Furniture Made by Gillow and Company for Workington Hall," *Antiques*, v. 127 (June 1985), pp. 1352–54.
2. Will no. 27389. City of Providence Probate.

124

SIDE CHAIR, 1790–1810
Baltimore, Maryland
Mahogany with light wood inlay; maple.
39 x 20½ x 18 x 18 (seat height)
Gift of Elliot Flint. 37.267

Provenance:
Nicholas Fry, Newport, ca. 1850; descent unknown to Elliot Flint (1863–1949) of Providence

Publication:
Bulletin, RISD, v. 26 (April 1938), p. 17.

Condition:
The right rear corner brace of the seat frame has been replaced, and the others reinforced with cut nails. All four legs have been pieced below the stretchers.

Chairs with heart-shaped backs and three banisters or splats, each inlaid and the center one pierced and fan-shaped at the top, are often attributed to Baltimore, where several related examples have histories of local ownership.¹ The 1795 Philadelphia book of prices listed a "heart back stay rail chair, with a banister and two upright splatts," and a similar design appeared in the New York book

of prices the following year (Montgomery 1966, nos. 101–2). It is also likely that Salem chairmakers produced similar chairs, as a 1794 bill for "Ht back chairs" suggests, and a related pair of side chairs has been attributed to Rhode Island as well.²

This design does not appear in Sheraton or Hepplewhite, although a design for a parlor chair in Sheraton's *Drawing Book* (pl. 28) has a similar fan-shaped banister. On this chair, the inlaid leaves at the top of splats and banister, and the tapering husks suspended from a ring at the top of the banister relate to inlays on other Baltimore chairs, tables, and case furniture. The leaf inlay at the base of the back, however, differs from the more common fan inlay.

A partially legible ink inscription on the inside of the front seat rail states that this chair was "made for Nicholas Fry, Newport" and later "presented by Capt. Solly [?] Devens... 1850." There was a Nicholas Fry in the 1860s who was a farmer in East Greenwich, and a Salem bill from the 1820s records the purchase by another N. Fry of "6 mahogany chairs (2d hand)" from John Jewett, a Salem furniture dealer.³ A Charles Devens of

Newport is listed in directories in the late 1850s as a ship owner and as president of Rhode Island Union Bank, although none of these names can be firmly linked with the names inscribed on this presentation chair.

TSM

1. Weidman 1984, no. 49; Baltimore 1947, no. 61.
2. Swan 1934, p. 14; Parke-Bernet sale 1740 (March 8–9, 1957), lot 100.
3. See photostat in Downs Manuscripts Collection, Winterthur, of original at the Essex Institute. According to Bjerkoe, Jewett (1795–1874) was active in Beverly and Salem from 1817 onward.



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SIDE CHAIR, 1790–1800
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Mahogany. 38½ x 21¼ x 21 x 18 (seat height)
Bequest of Charles L. Pendleton. 04.124

While Charles Pendleton's collection clearly reflects a preference for Chippendale-style furniture from Philadelphia, he did include some later examples in the Hepplewhite style, including this Philadelphia side chair, originally one of a set of at least ten.¹ This particular acquisition may have been inspired by a set of similar chairs which was on extended loan to Independence Hall at the end of the 19th century (Miss Ella

Parsons collection, Philadelphia, Parke-Bernet sale 81 [January 14, 1939], lot 68). Both have in common shield backs – or “vase” backs to use the 18th-century term – with five carved splats rising from a carved arc in the stay rail. In turn, they have loose seats housed within frames with serpentine front rails, and straight side rails tenoned through the rear legs, as well as tapering legs reinforced by stretchers, the front legs being molded. Pendleton liked his Philadelphia chair well enough to commission a double-chairback settee based on it (fig. a), as he did with his “Grinling Gibbons” settee (pp. 24–25). Because the Providence cabinetmaking firms of Morlock & Bayer and R. H. Breitenstein & Son collaborated on reproducing the latter for Pendleton, one or both firms could also have been involved in making the Hepplewhite settee.

Even though the back of Pendleton's Hepplewhite settee is virtually identical to his Philadelphia side chair, except doubled, the settee's seat is over-upholstered, and its tapering legs are flat, with the front legs relying on string inlay for their decorative effect. These alterations may in turn have been inspired by a closely related set of Philadelphia shield-back side chairs which are thought to have been purchased in Philadelphia in 1788 by John Brown's daughter Abigail at the time of her marriage to John Francis. At the end

Fig. 125a
Double chair-back settee, Providence, ca. 1900. Mahogany. 37 x 43 x 20 x 15 (seat height). Bequest of Charles L. Pendleton. 04.054





125b
Cabinet photograph, early 20th century.
(Courtesy, Nicolas Brown Foundation,
Providence)

of the 19th century, this set had been inherited by the Herreshoff family in Bristol, Rhode Island, where Pendleton might well have seen it (Cooper 1973a, pp. 735, 737). Other related shield-back chairs having a John Brown association were acquired around 1900 by Elliot Flint at Potowomut where Brown had owned a country estate. Flint in turn had copies made by the Boston Furniture Co. of Pawtucket, of which an example can be seen in the cabinet photograph illustrated here (fig. b).²

Unlike the side chairs, the Pendleton settee dispensed with stretchers. Also, its legs terminate in blocks to accommodate casters, which have since been removed. Even when the casters were in place, however, the seat would have been only sixteen inches from the floor, rather than the customary seventeen or eighteen inches. Such a low seat certainly suggests that the Pendleton settee was originally intended for use in a parlor, or a bedroom.

CPM

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SIDE CHAIR, 1790–1815
Boston-Salem area, Massachusetts
Birch with painted decoration. 35 $\frac{5}{8}$ x
19 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 18 x 20 (seat height)
Gift of Elizabeth Horan Edgerly in
honor of Elizabeth Rogers Horan.
83.019

Provenance:

According to family tradition, belonged to John Derby (1762–1831) of Salem; probably to his daughter Sarah Derby Rogers (1805–1877); to her son John Rogers (1829–1904), the sculptor; to his daughter Katherine Rogers; who gave it in 1959 to her niece, the mother of the donor

Publication:

Museum Notes, RISD, 1984, p. 18.

Condition:

The present leather seat is not original, and is somewhat higher than the original upholstery. There is no evidence that the seat was ever caned. The ornamental painting has been retouched, probably in the early 20th century.

Many sets of painted furniture owned in Boston and Salem in the Federal period

have survived. Though less expensive than carved or veneered items, furniture with “fancy” painted decoration was no less fashionable in the first decades of the 19th century. In 1821, for example, Elizabeth Carter Reynolds of Newburyport was setting up her new home in the West End of Boston. She recorded her purchase of “6 White Chamber chairs” and “6 Fancy Chairs White,” confirming that white painted furniture was a particularly popular choice for bedrooms (see fig. 127a).¹ Sarah Derby, her Salem contemporary, married six years later and it may have been on that occasion that she acquired this painted chair as part of a larger set.

As the granddaughter of Elias Haskett Derby, one of the wealthiest merchants in this country, Sarah would have had her pick of any furniture then available in Boston and Salem. By choosing white painted furniture, she was following a family tradition. She would have been familiar with the set of white oval-back chairs with Prince of Wales feathers that her grandfather had owned, and the variant set in gold and green that her uncle evidently bought in Philadelphia in 1801 (Fales 1972, pp. 43, 96). Other members of the Derby family had also commissioned some of the most elabo-



1. The Roman numeral “x” appears on the inside of the front seat rail.
2. This photograph and related correspondence between Elliot Flint and John Nicholas Brown concerning the Potowomut chairs are preserved in the archives of the Nicolas Brown Foundation at 357 Benefit Street, Providence, Rhode Island.

rate painted furniture ever produced in this country.

Less innovative than Gragg's elastic chairs (cat. 127), this delicate square-back chair with intersecting Gothic arches represents a traditional Sheraton-inspired design, to which the fancy painted decoration was added. The present leather covering of the seat is not original, but it probably follows the lines of the original upholstery and thus documents the box-like shape that complemented the rectilinear lines of the chair's overall design. Furthermore, the edges of the legs, stiles, and crest rail have been outlined in green, just as related chairs painted in dark colors were outlined in white, to emphasize their taut edges and slender parts.

Other side and armchairs with similar Gothic backs but different floral decoration and upholstery indicate the range of options supplied by Boston's decorative painters. One related set of side and armchairs have caned seats and are painted a dark color.² Another armchair has differently shaped arms and bolder decoration, and a related pair of side chairs from a different set is also painted dark and evidently had loose seats.³ The placement of the painted garlands and streamers shows little variation from chair to chair, and yet the difference in the quality of the painting indicates that several different craftsmen must have been at work.

The dark painted armchairs sold in 1937 were catalogued as English and were said to be made of beech. The famous set of Derby chairs with Prince of Wales feathers has also been thought possibly to be English. This chair is made of birch, however, and may be an American copy of imported English models. By the time it was made, dozens of fancy chairmakers and decorative painters were working in Boston and Salem. One or two of Boston's decorative painters had emigrated from England and were no doubt familiar with the latest painted designs popular abroad.

TSM

1. Barbara Adams Blundell, "Setting Up House in 1821: An Account Book of Elizabeth Margaret Carter of Newburyport." *Essex Institute Historical Collections*, v. 113 (January 1977), p. 23.
2. AAA sale 4336 (October 16, 1937), lot 199.
3. Stoneman 1965, no. 56; see also *Maine Antique Digest* (April 1985), p. 37A.

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ARMCHAIR, patented 1808

Samuel Gragg (1772–1855)

Boston

White oak, hickory, soft maple, beech, with painted decoration. 33½ x 20¼ x 25 x 18 (seat height)

Gift of the Wunsch Americana Foundation. 84.024

Provenance:

Harry Arons, Bridgeport, Connecticut; Mr. and Mrs. Charles Montgomery, New Haven, Connecticut; Art Institute of Chicago; Sotheby Parke Bernet sale 4709y (October 23–24, 1981), lot 558, where purchased by the donor

Publications:

Fales 1972, fig. 88; Barter 1984, p. 8; *Museum Notes*, RISD, 1985, pp. 23–24; *The Decorative Arts Society News Letter*, v. 11 (December 1985), p. 8.

Condition:

Aside from considerable loss of original paint, wrought iron braces have been added to reinforce the bentwood arms, and the left-most slat of the seat has been replaced.

As a Windsor chairmaker, Samuel Gragg would have had to master the art of bending wood with the assistance of steam and clamps: hence, he was in an ideal position to recreate the sinuous

silhouette of the ancient Greek klismos chair as recently illustrated by Thomas Hope in his *Household Furniture and Interior Decoration* of 1807. Gragg seems to have fully realized that his exploitation of the pliant character of wood for the purpose of achieving an aesthetically satisfying end was significant, because he took out a patent on what he termed "elastic chairs" on August 31, 1808.¹ In the process he often pushed technology too far, with the result that few of his elastic chairs have survived, or if so, are rarely unscathed. In fact, the arms of the RISD chair had to be reinforced early on with wrought-iron braces. Jean-Joseph Chapuis (1765–1864), a contemporary of Gragg working quite independently of him in Brussels, encountered similar structural problems as he, too, attempted to design furniture along the lines of the klismos. A pair of armchairs and an oval work table by him in the Museum's collection clearly reflect the structural weakness, but visual strength of bentwood and laminated furniture at the beginning of the 19th century.

Since a Gragg chair was made up of a variety of different woods including oak, hickory, maple, and beech, their contrasting grains and colors were made harmonious by painting and decorating the chair's entire surface. Whereas the closely related Windsor might be painted green, black, or white, with the bamboo turnings occasionally picked out in a con-



Fig. 127a
Photograph of the "White Chamber" at The Mount, Bristol, Rhode Island, ca. 1900. (Courtesy, Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities, Boston)

trasting color, Gragg enhanced the classical spirit of his chair by way of peacock feathers painted on the crest rail, and acanthus leaves and honeysuckle painted along the seat rail and over the knees of the legs. As an additional reference to the Antique, and at extra cost, the front feet could terminate in carved cloven hooves, as those on the RISD example do. Painted furniture, although less costly than its carved and inlaid counterparts, was by no means less fashionable, having been introduced in England in the second half of the 18th century by Robert Adam and James Wyatt, and then popularized through the publications of Thomas Sheraton to the extent that this type of furniture is often referred to as "Fancy Sheraton."

Recommended at the time as suitable for the bedroom or dressing room, a suite of painted furniture, replete with ten Gragg arm and side chairs, appears in late 19th-century photographs of the "White Chamber" in The Mount, the Bristol, Rhode Island, home of the Hon. James De Wolf (fig. a). Seemingly undisturbed since the house was completed to the designs of Russell Warren in 1808, the De Wolf Gragg chairs differ slightly from RISD's example in that the stile, side seat rail, and front leg are constructed out of one continuous piece of bentwood. In the RISD example the stile and side seat rail are formed out of one piece of bentwood, while the turned front leg is doweled in separately.

In the inventory compiled at the time of James De Wolf's death in 1838, the ten Gragg chairs listed in the "White Chamber" were valued at \$1 each, while in the best bedroom, ten mahogany chairs with pierced splats in the Hepplewhite style were valued at \$4 each.² Therefore, the De Wolf inventory provides valuable documentary evidence for the use of large sets of chairs in bedrooms, as well as the relative value of painted Gragg chairs and carved mahogany chairs made at approximately the same date. The placement of Gragg chairs in the "White Chamber" also recalls that all-white bedchambers became popular at the end of the 18th century. Indeed, there was a similar room in another De Wolf house in Bristol, also built in 1808 from the designs of Russell Warren, William De Wolf's Hey Bonnie Hall on Poppasquash Point. Caroline King has left a memorable description of a similar white chamber in her aunt's house in Newburyport, Massachusetts:

The room was furnished with white



Fig. 127b
Chairmaker's brand on underside of rear seat rail.

painted furniture, the dimity drapery of windows and bed were white, the straw matting on the floor was white. . . The great white bed stood like a snow-drift, crowned with a thick white 'comforter' or 'blessing' as we called the 'down puff' of those days.³

Originally, RISD's Gragg chair formed part of a set of eight side and two armchairs and a settee; other pieces of the set are now at the Henry Ford Museum, the Winterthur Museum, the Art Institute of Chicago, and the Yale Art Gallery.⁴ A pair of similar Gragg sidechairs, but without hoof feet, originally formed part of a set which belonged to the steamboat inventor Robert Fulton; they are now in the collection of the Peabody Museum in Salem.⁵ It is interesting to speculate whether the technological advances inherent in the design of a Gragg elastic chair held special appeal for the scientifically-minded Fulton, especially as its light, resilient construction made it ideally suited for contending with the sway of the grand saloon while at sea. Similarly, John Henry Belter's chairs from the middle of the 19th century appear on shipboard because their laminated construction held up so well under stressful conditions (cat. 135).

Aside from improved construction, the Gragg chair also offered increased comfort through the form-fitting profile of its S-shaped splats. That feature was in turn adopted by Boston chairmakers in succeeding decades, such as William Hancock in his upholstered armchairs and rockers of the 1820s, and Abijah Wetherbee in his shapely version of the Boston rocker. To judge from the recent work of Thomas Hucker as seen in 1984 in RISD's *Bentwood* exhibition, modifications are still being made in Boston to the Gragg chair as part of the never-ending quest for a totally successful synthesis of form and function.⁶

CPM

1. Kane 1971, pp. 27–37; Kane 1976, pp. 183–84.
2. James De Wolf's 1838 inventory, v. 3, p. 159, Town of Bristol (R.I.) Probate.
3. Caroline King, *When I Lived in Salem* (Brattleboro, Vermont, 1937), p. 192.
4. Kane 1976, pp. 183–84; *Antiques*, v. 107 (June 1975), p. 1064.
5. Paul Forsythe Johnston, *Steam and Sea* (Salem: Peabody Museum, 1983), p. 20.
6. Barter 1984, pp. 32–33.

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ARMCHAIR AND SIDE CHAIR (one of a pair), 1810–20

Probably New York City or Newark, New Jersey

Soft maple, yellow-poplar, white pine, black cherry, ash. 33 x 17¾ x 15¾ (armchair); 33 x 18½ x 15½; 18 (seat height) (side chair)

Gift of William C. Kendall. 41.033.1–2

Provenance:

Elizabeth (Tallman) Kendall Hunt (1785–1859), Providence, Rhode Island; to her grandson, Oliver Kendall (1843–1917); to his son, the donor

Often advertised for sale in conjunction with Windsor chairs, Sheraton fancy chairs were almost as versatile, although confined to use indoors. A set of English fancy chairs were even found on board the British frigate *Boxer* after it was captured by the American *Enterprise* in the course of an early naval battle in the War of 1812 off the coast of Portland, Maine.¹ The term "fancy" did not refer so much to the degree of ornamentation found on the chairs, but rather its fanciful nature, such as the flowers and curling leaves found on the crest rail of the RISD chair, one of a set including an arm and two side chairs.² Aside from the survival of the original freehand and stenciled gilt decoration, the other distinctive feature of the RISD chairs is their lattice backs, which ultimately derive from plate 3 in the 1802 edition of *The London Chair-Makers' and Carvers' Book of Prices for Workmanship*.³ Although fancy chairs often have caned seats, rush was also frequently used, and the RISD chairs retain their original painted rush seats.

In light of a label affixed to the back of the skirt board of one of the side chairs by the antiquarian-minded donor, William Kendall, they appear to have been owned in Providence since the early 19th century. He noted that the "three Sheraton Chairs belonged to my Great Grandmother Kendall," who would have been Elizabeth (Tallman) Kendall, the daughter of the Providence shipwright Col. Benjamin Tallman. She married first Oliver Kendall in 1810 and after his death in 1843, married Samuel Hunt. Even though it is presumed that she or another member of her family purchased these chairs in Providence at the time of her marriage, it is likely that the retailer had imported them either from New York City, which dominated the fancy chair market, or its rival to the south, Newark, New Jersey. One of

Providence's principal importers of fancy chairs, the cabinetmaker Thomas Howard, advertised in the *Providence Gazette* for April 3, 1813, that he was the sole agent for chairs and settees made by Tunis and Nutman of Newark (Ott 1969, p. 15). The scale of his operation is indicated in an advertisement almost a decade later in the *Providence Patriot* for June 29, 1822, in which he announced the availability of "4,000 Fancy and Windsor Chairs, of a superior quality, new and handsome patterns, from 50 cents to five dollars." And in the same year another Providence importer of chairs, Christian M. Nestell, advertised in the *Providence Patriot* on August 28, 1822, that "he has constantly for sale, a full assortment of Fancy Chairs of the Newark make, which are superior to any other chairs of the kind; they excel in finish those made in New York."⁵

CPM

1. Fancy chairs from the *Boxer* are in the Portland Museum of Art and the Maine Historical Society, both in Portland, Maine.
2. The concept of "fancy" and its application to the decorative arts was the subject of Sumpter Priddy's Master's thesis at Winterthur in 1980 titled, *Fancy: Acceptance of an Attitude, Emergence of a Style*.
3. Montgomery 1966, p. 457. Anthony A. P. Stuempfig in "William Haydon and William H. Stewart, Fancy Chair-Makers in Philadelphia," *Antiques*, v. 104 (September 1973), pp. 452–57, illustrates a set of chairs with similar lattice backs made between 1812 and 1813.
4. A similar set was a wedding present of Elisha Reynolds Potter to his bride for the house that he built in Kingston, Rhode Island, in 1809. See *Providence Sunday Journal* (July 7, 1935), p. 9.
5. Robert Emlen kindly brought the last two references to the author's attention.



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DOLL'S SIDE CHAIR, 1820-40

Baltimore, Maryland

Soft maple, yellow-poplar painted to resemble rosewood, with stenciled and freehand gilt decoration, and caned seat.

14¼ x 10¼ x 10 x 7⅝ (seat height)

Gift of Mrs. Henry G. Vaughan.

44.519.17

Provenance:

Acquired by the donor in the early 20th century for Hamilton House, the Vaughan summer residence in South Berwick, Maine

The child who originally owned this chair could have taken pleasure in the fact that it is a remarkably faithful replica of the adult version of a typical Baltimore "fancy" chair, with no distortion in design or loss of decorative detail in the course of its reduction. Both have in common broad rectangular tablets for crest rails, elbow-shaped side rails at the juncture of the rear legs and stubby raked stiles, and clusters of ring turnings where the legs and stiles join the seat rail.

A decorative painter enhanced these formal elements with a combination of stenciled and freehand gilt decoration on a grained ground simulating rosewood, and in this instance left behind a veritable encyclopedia of classical motifs despite the limited surface available. Acanthus leaves and Grecian scrolls on the crest rail, a rosette flanked by cornucopias on the stay rail, a rosette flanked by anthemion on the front seat rail, palmettes on the "elbows," rosettes on the side rails above the front legs, and acanthus leaves again on the stiles and legs are not only found on the RISD chair, but also on a full-scale version reproduced in William Voss Elder's comprehensive exhibition catalogue, *Baltimore Painted Furniture, 1800–1840* (Baltimore Museum 1972, no.37). As Elder's study includes no examples of Baltimore "fancy" furniture in miniature, RISD's chair would appear to be a rare survivor of this type.

CPM

including Governor George Wyllys, first owner of the family seat, Charter Oak Place, and his son Samuel Wyllys, a magistrate of the colony. The latter Wyllys was probably the one who originally imported the chairs from London around 1700. Numbering at least a dozen, they would have been referred to as "cane great chairs." Such a provenance proved attractive to Hartford antiquarians, including Daniel Wadsworth, who acquired one at the 1827 sale. He in turn had twelve copies made between then and the time of the following gift to the Connecticut Historical Society on November 19, 1844: "An ancient and handsome chair, which formerly belonged to the Wyllys family, and six new ones made to match the former."¹

Of the six other copies Wadsworth had made, some not surprisingly found their way to the institution which bears his name, the Wadsworth Atheneum, including the example now at RISD. While the

original motive for Wadsworth's commissioning twelve copies will probably never be known, it was obviously not done with the intent to deceive. Wadsworth's original Wyllys chair at the Connecticut Historical Society bears the stamp "S. Ely" on its replaced seat rail, indicating that it was restored by Smith Ely, a New York City chairmaker, who presumably made the dozen copies for Wadsworth at the same time.² Having previously been in partnership with a Mr. Edwards from 1823 to 1831, Ely worked under his own name between 1832 and 1844. As he specialized in cane seated chairs, albeit of the modern French type, he would have been a logical choice. An example of a French chair by Ely is also at RISD for comparison (cat. 132).

Smith Ely's reproduction is remarkably faithful to the Wyllys chair. To be sure, when it is compared line for line, Ely's turnings are not as well defined, and definitely suggest a copy made after the

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ARMCHAIR, 1832–44

Smith Ely (1800–1884)

New York City

Walnut. 53 x 25½ x 18 x 17 (seat height)

Farago Art Fund. 86.114

Provenance:

Commissioned by Daniel Wadsworth, Hartford, Connecticut; Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, Connecticut; Tom Le Clair's Clearing House Galleries, Wethersfield, Connecticut, sale (November 2, 1984)

An early interest in antique furniture in general, and old chairs in particular, seems to have developed at the time of the Plymouth bicentennial in 1820, and the Providence bicentennial in 1836, to judge from the newspaper article of 1845 in the *Providence Journal* quoted in this catalogue's introductory essay. As noted there, by the 1840s the fashion for "Mayflower" chairs had been superseded by "Roger Williams" chairs. But as none of them are known to have survived, it is necessary to turn to Hartford, Connecticut, to obtain some idea of what a "Mayflower" or "Roger Williams" chair might have looked like.

In 1827, an auction of the Hartford estate of Hezekiah Wyllys included eleven "old high backed chairs." Hezekiah Wyllys's ancestors had figured prominently in colonial Connecticut history,



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fact. The reproduction deviates the greatest from the original chair in the vicinity of the scrolled front feet, which had been reduced to mere stubs by the time Ely saw them. His solution for the lack of detail in that area consisted of repeating the two ovoid-shaped block turnings on the lower portion of the leg a third time, and then adding a ball foot. The latter detail, rather amusingly, ended up on the rear feet as well.

Smith Ely's dozen copies of the Wyllys cane chair were not to be the last, because Alvin Crocker Nye included front and side elevations of it, as well as a seat plan and details of turnings and carving, in his pioneering effort to record American furniture through measured line drawings, titled *A Collection of Scale-drawings, Details, and Sketches of What is Commonly Known as Colonial Furniture* (New York, 1895, pls. 8–9). As a key source book for American furniture manufacturers at the turn of the century, it must have inspired many of the replicas of Wyllys chairs seen on the market today. But only RISD's and eleven others have the distinction of belonging to the first group from the 1830s or early 1840s, making them "the earliest known copies of American-made or owned furniture of the colonial period."³

CPM

1. The most complete published account of Daniel Wadsworth's Wyllys chair and the copies based on it appears in Wadsworth 1985, pp. 194–95. Also see: *Connecticut Chairs in the Collection of The Connecticut Historical Society* (Hartford: Connecticut Historical Society, 1956), pp. 14–17; *A Selection of 19th Century American Chairs* (Hartford: Stowe-Day Foundation, 1973), pp. 20–21; and Richard Saunders with Helen Raye, *Daniel Wadsworth: Patron of the Arts* (Hartford: Wadsworth Atheneum, 1981), p. 80. Information provided the writer by Robert Trent, curator, Connecticut Historical Society, suggests that the original Wyllys chairs were ordered from London by Hezekiah Wyllys of Hartford, secretary of the Connecticut Colony, rather than Samuel Wyllys, as noted by Hosley.
2. In *A Selection of 19th-Century American Chairs*, it is incorrectly stated that the copies of the Wyllys chair are also stamped "S. Ely."
3. Wadsworth 1985, p. 194.

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SIDE CHAIR, 1831–45
Thomas Maxwell Parker (1803–1884)
Providence, Rhode Island
Maple with maple veneer. 32¾ x 17¾ x 21 x 18 (seat height)
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Joseph K. Ott.
85.016.1

Condition:

Restored in 1984 at the SPNEA Conservation Center, Waltham, Massachusetts, under the supervision of Robert Mussey.

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SIDE CHAIR, 1836–40
Smith Ely (1800–1884), maker
New York City
Walter Corey (1809–1889), decorator and retailer
Portland, Maine
Hard maple with rosewood graining. 34 x 18¼ x 19½ x 18 (seat height)
Gift of Christopher Monkhouse. 85.079

Provenance:

McLaughlin's Antiques, Augusta, Maine, 1968

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SIDE CHAIR, 1841 (from seven-piece suite of bedroom furniture)
James Sharp (1790–1873)
Boston and Watertown, Massachusetts
Hard and soft maples, beech, birch with painted decoration. 34½ x 18½ x 19 x 17½ (seat height)
Promised gift of Mr. Peter W. Eliot.

Provenance:

Miss K. B. Upham, Ogunquit, Maine; Corey Daniels, Wells, Maine, 1985

Condition:

The painted decoration has been conserved by Alice K. Miles, Providence, Rhode Island, and the cane seat replaced in May 1986.

By the late 1820s, Sheraton fancy chairs comparable to the example at RISD (cat. 128) came into competition with chairs that eliminated freehand and stenciled decoration, and relied entirely on richly grained surfaces for decorative effect. This simpler treatment was in keeping with French Restoration taste, and is often found on chairs which today are referred to as "fiddle-back" or "vase-

back" chairs because of the shape of the splat, but at the time were known as "French chairs."¹ In addition to a vase-shaped splat, French chairs invariably have broad crest rails with scrolled ends, cane or upholstered seats, rolled front seat rails, and saber or turned legs. Of the three examples of French chairs at RISD, the earliest is labeled by Thomas Maxwell Parker of Providence, Rhode Island.

When Thomas Parker arrived in Providence from New Hampshire in 1828, he took over the shop of the cabinetmaker Rhodes G. Allen (fl. 1815–1828) on Mathewson Street. At that location he advertised himself in 1829 as a "Fancy and Windsor Chair Painter."² By 1831 Parker had relocated to 2 Green Street in order to accommodate more satisfactorily his expanded business, which included not only the decoration of chairs, but also their manufacture; around the corner on fashionable Westminster Street he opened a warehouse for retailing his chairs. According to the label on the inside of the back seat rail of the RISD chair, it was made at the Green Street address, presumably between 1831 and the mid-1840s; by 1848 Parker is listed in the Providence directory as a grocer.

Significantly, in Parker's advertisements in the *Providence Daily Journal* in the 1830s, he referred to himself as a "manufacturer of curled maple and mahogany cane and cushion seat chairs,"³ in keeping with the new fashion. The fact that he did not mention fancy painted chairs suggests that they were somewhat in eclipse. Originally from a set of four, RISD's French chair is made entirely of curly maple, with bird's-eye maple veneer on the crest rail.⁴ On less expensive chairs made of unfigured maple and poplar, Parker grained their surfaces to simulate rosewood, of which an example is in the Rhode Island Historical Society, and six others were in the well-known Benjamin Flayderman sale of 1931.⁵

On the basis of surviving examples, Walter Corey of Portland, Maine, appears to have been far more successful than Thomas Parker in the manufacture of chairs, especially French chairs with rosewood graining. This is substantiated by an article in the *Eastern Argus* which noted on June 2, 1840 that after only four years in business, "Walter Corey has... a very expensive establishment for the manufacture of Chairs and Cabinet work," capable of producing "from 300 to 500 chairs per week besides other



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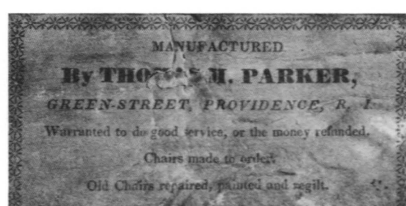


Fig. 131a
Chairmaker's label on back of front seat rail.

departments of labor.”⁶ The Corey chair with rosewood graining at RISD is characteristic of the firm's work from the 1840s, of which several comparable examples have been illustrated.⁷ However, along with “W. COREY, PORTLAND, ME.” stenciled on the rear of the back seat rail, “S. Ely” is stamped on the underside of the seat rail, identifying the New York chairmaker Smith Ely, who also made the dozen copies of the Wyllys cane great chair for Daniel Wadsworth of Hartford, Connecticut at about the same time (cat. 130). Thus, this chair indicates that the demand for Corey chairs on occasion exceeded the supply, making it necessary to turn to New York for unfinished chairs, a pattern already encountered in Providence with Sheraton fancy chairs (cat. 128). If the RISD chair had not been stamped by Ely, it would be virtually

indistinguishable from chairs made totally by Corey, so similar are its design and construction.

Despite the fashion in the 1830s for grained surfaces, the demand for fancy furniture was not particularly affected, and around 1840 gained new impetus with the growing popularity of painted pine cottage furniture. Particularly well suited for bedrooms, this type of furniture was a specialty of such Boston firms as Edward Hennessey and James Sharp, as noted in the entry accompanying a night stand from the same suite as this third French chair at RISD (cat. 17). Manufactured and decorated by James Sharp in 1841, this chair comes midway in his career of producing fancy painted furniture, stretching back to 1820 and as far forward as 1869. On this particular example Sharp's decorative skills have been used to unite the design of the crest rail with the stiles through an interlocking strapwork motif, and the crest rail with the splat through a trumpet vase overflowing with daisies. Such a choice of flowers suggests summertime, when this chair would have been put into service along with the rest of the suite by Miss K.B. Upham at her cottage in Ogunquit, Maine.

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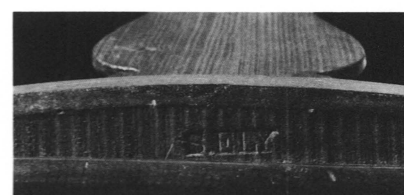


Fig. 132a
Chairmaker's brand on underside of rear seat rail.



Fig. 132b
Retailer's stenciled label on back of rear seat rail.

1. Elizabeth A. Ingerman, “Personal Experiences of an Old New York Cabinetmaker,” *Antiques*, v. 84 (November 1963), pp. 577–78.
2. *Cadet and Statesman* (Providence), January 17, 1829. This newspaper reference to Thomas Parker and its sequel cited below were kindly brought to the writer's attention by Sara Steiner.



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DOLL'S SOFA, ca. 1840

Probably New England

Mahogany with mahogany veneer; pine.

20 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 36 x 14 x 7 (seat height)

Gift of Miss Lucy Truman Aldrich.

40.143

Condition:

Reupholstered in the early 20th century.

Along with fully curtained beds, upholstered sofas were among the most expensive pieces of domestic furniture in the 18th century, and therefore found only in the household inventories of the very rich. The great status symbolized by the sofa is clearly indicated in portraiture: out of all of John Singleton Copley's sitters, only a few were apparently thought grand enough to be shown seated on a sofa.¹ However, by the early 19th century this situation had changed rather dramatically, and even middle-class parlors were thought incomplete if they did not include a sofa comparable to this one (albeit full-sized) along with the center table and requisite number of chairs. Not only does this change suggest that the cost of upholstery materials and labor had been reduced, but also that less upholstery was required.



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3. *Providence Daily Journal*, June 20, 1836. This advertisement first appeared in the *Journal* in 1831.
4. One of the chairs is in the collection of the Rhode Island Historical Society, while the other two are in a private collection in Providence.
5. The example in the Rhode Island Historical Society is illustrated and discussed in: Robert P. Emlen, "From the Collections: An Ordinary Chair," *Rhode Island History*, v. 42 (May 1983), pp. 67–68. Also see Eleanor H. Gustafson, "Museum Accessions," *Antiques*, v. 121 (June 1982), p. 1334. For a set of six, see Benjamin Flayderman collection, Boston, AAA-Anderson Galleries sale 3908 (April 17–18, 1931), lot 195.
6. Earle G. Shettleworth, Jr. and William D. Barry, "Walter Corey's Furniture Manufactory in Portland, Maine," *Antiques*, v. 121 (May 1982), p. 1199.
7. Fales 1972, p. 202; Kane 1976, pp. 167–68; Shettleworth, *op. cit.*, pp. 1204–05; Edwin A. Churchill, *Simple Forms and Vivid Colors* (Augusta: Maine State Museum, 1983), pp. 90–91.

A comparison of serpentine-back sofas from the very end of the 18th century with this miniature classical sofa with scrolled arms from around 1840 clearly shows the increasing use of wood in place of upholstery. Furthermore, the expensive carved decoration found on the crest rails, seat rails, and arm supports of earlier classical sofas from the 1810s and 1820s has now given way to veneers, making sofas even less expensive.

Veneers came into favor in the wake of French Restoration taste, and their popularity in this country is well documented in the first pattern book for furniture ever to be issued in America, John Hall's *Cabinet Maker's Assistant*, published in Baltimore in 1840. The well-known broadside illustrating the wares of the New York City cabinetmaking firm of Joseph Meeks & Sons is a further reflection of the wide application of veneered surfaces at the time the RISD sofa was made (Davidson 1985, p. 255). On the RISD sofa even the winged lion's-paw feet have been reduced to silhouettes, in order to emphasize the decorative role of figured veneers in its design. Only a single drapery fold tucked into the two scrolled ends of the sofa's crest rail has been included as a reminder of the earlier use of carving, or perhaps as a premonition of its return in the Rococo Revival, as in RISD's suite of Belter chairs (cat. 135).

CPM

1. The theme of upholstery as an index of wealth was explored by Morrison Heckscher, Curator, American Wing, Metropolitan Museum of Art, in a lecture titled "Upholstery Techniques of Eighteenth-Century America: Easy Chairs, Sofas and Settees" at a conference on historical upholstery and drapery at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and Sturbridge Village in the spring of 1979. For a further discussion of this theme, see Cooper 1980, p. 59; and Monkhouse 1984, p. 18.



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ARMCHAIR AND SIDE CHAIR (one of four), ca. 1863

John Henry Belter (1804–1863)

New York City (b. Germany)

Laminated rosewood. 54 x 24 x 22 x 15

(seat height) (armchair); 33 x 18½ x 17

(seat height) (side chair)

Gift of Mrs. Stephen C. Jones, Richard S. Chew, Jr., Captain Robert S. Chew, Jr., Mrs. Edward Hutcheson, Mrs. Jack Loew, William Davis Miller Chew, and John J. Chew, Jr., in memory of Mary Chew Miller and Commander William Davis Miller. 77.088 and 77.087.1

Provenance:

Purchased in New York City in 1864 by Dr. Thomas Mawney Potter (1814–1890) Kingston, Rhode Island; to his sister, Mary E. Potter (d. 1901); to her nephew, James Brown Mason Potter, Jr. (d. 1916); from whom acquired by Commander William Davis Miller

Publication:

Monkhouse 1980, p. 133.

Condition:

The existing silk upholstery dates from about 1940.

In response to the demand for rosewood furniture during the Rococo Revival,

the German-trained cabinetmaker John Henry Belter helped develop a method for overcoming that wood's innate fragility through lamination. Using extremely thin layers or veneers of rosewood, with the grain of each alternating perpendicularly through seven to nine layers, fastened by means of glue and a series of cauls or presses, Belter produced a rosewood which was both flexible and durable. Although Belter was not the only cabinetmaker in New York City to use laminated rosewood in the manufacture of furniture – Charles Boudouine and Joseph Meeks must also be considered – his work appears to have been more refined, especially in terms of the extreme thinness of the rosewood veneers he used. Once formed, the surface could be left solid, but carved with fruit and flowers in relief. For more elaborate and expensive pieces, it could be perforated with the assistance of a special saw (which Belter invented), and then carved.¹

The pattern now known as "Rosalie" – after a plantation in Natchez, Mississippi, where a parlor suite of this description was ordered in 1859 – proved to be most popular, judging from the large number of pieces found in both public and private collections, of which the partial parlor suite at RISD is an example. While

this pattern avoided the more expensive perforated decoration, it still embodied the essence of Rococo Revivalism through its use of foliated C- and S-scroll designs. A typical parlor suite consisted of seven pieces, and along with the four side chairs and large arm or gentleman's chair included in the RISD suite, would also have had a slightly smaller lady's chair with elbow brackets in place of arms, and finally a sofa as the focal point for the entire suite. A large suite could have as many as a dozen pieces, including a center table and a pair of *méridiennes* or daybeds. Thanks to the existence of a few pieces with their original labels, it can be shown that parlor suites in the "Rosalie" pattern were in production as early as 1852 until the time of Belter's death in 1863; in fact, the RISD suite was sent from New York in 1864, or approximately a year after his death.

The Rococo Revival style was intended principally for the urban parlor; thus it is unusual that the Naval surgeon Thomas Mawney Potter purchased the Belter suite now at RISD for his family homestead in rural Kingston, Rhode Island. However, as the house was already filled with exquisitely detailed 18th-century furniture (cats. 39, 63, 112), Potter must have felt that the richly carved Belter suite would be compatible.² A far more typical order for a suite of Belter furniture in the "Rosalie" pattern would have been the one received from the prominent thread manufacturer and later Governor of Rhode Island, Alfred H. Littlefield (1829–1893), for the double parlor of his large home in Central Falls.³ In keeping with the proportions of that room, the Littlefield parlor suite included twelve pieces, which are still in the possession of a descendant.

As for the renewed interest in the Rococo Revival, and especially the work of John Henry Belter, Providence has the distinction of producing one of the significant collectors of Victorian decorative arts, Charles Brackett. Although best known as a Hollywood film producer in the 1920s and 1930s, Brackett filled his home on Prospect Street, the impressive George Corliss mansion, with many distinguished examples which he took pleasure in showing to those who understood his advanced taste. A visit to the Corliss mansion in 1940 by the director of the Museum, Alexander Dorner, could be said to have ignited the spark for the Museum's collecting later-19th-century decorative arts.⁴

CPM

1. For the most complete study yet published on Belter, see Marvin D. Schwartz et al., *The Furniture of John Henry Belter and the Rococo Revival* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1981).
2. William Davis Miller, *An Early Rhode Island Collector*, reprinted from *The Walpole Society Notebook* (Portland, Maine, 1935).
3. Ralph S. Mohr, *Governors for Three Hundred Years, 1638–1959, Rhode Island and Providence Plantations* (Providence, 1959), pp. 270–71, 297.
4. Correspondence between Charles Brackett and Alexander Dorner, RISD Museum archives.

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ARMCHAIR, 1875–80
Cherry. 31 x 25½ x 23
Anonymous gift. 82.110

Publication:
The Decorative Arts Society Newsletter, v. 11
(December 1985), p. 5.

Condition:
Reupholstered in the early 20th century.

The unknown maker of this Egyptian Revival upholstered armchair appears to have consulted a copy of Charles Percier and Pierre-François-Léonard Fontaine's *Recueil des décorations intérieures* (Paris, 1801, reissued 1812) in the course of developing its design. Plate 27 in that volume shows a low upholstered settee for two people remarkably similar to the RISD chair, each having a rectangular silhouette, stubby trumpet-turned legs, and arms supported by winged sphinxes.



But whereas the Percier and Fontaine design depends on ancient Greece and Rome for its decorative vocabulary, the RISD chair also draws heavily upon that of Egypt.

The reticulated splat of the RISD chair is dominated by a winged sun disc. While in Egypt it would have been reserved for use over a lintel of a temple or tomb entrance as an apotropaic device to ward off evil, it is here used decoratively for exotic effect. Further liberties have been taken with the sun disc by introducing a star within the disc, and flanking it with a pair of birds, rather than traditional cobras. The wings surrounding the disc doubtless suggested such an alteration to the designer of this chair. In the spandrels of the back and bracket supports for the arms, closed lotus blossoms appear and open lotus blossoms are used in the central portion of the reticulated splat, in conjunction with swag drapery with serrated borders. While the lotus blossoms are Egyptian in derivation, the swag drapery is more suggestive of Classical Rome.

A similar conflation of Egyptian and classical motifs can be seen in the sphinx supports, which are only Egyptian to the extent of the *nemes* (headcloth): otherwise the wings, curling tails and arthritic claws are features found on later Greek and Roman sphinxes, and related beasts such as harpies and griffins. The front chair rail consists of a bundle of reeds bound together by broad bands incised with lotus blossoms, which also appear on the collars of the legs. The front posts directly below the arms incorporate rectangular panels decorated in low relief with flaming torches, a Greco-Roman motif.¹ That the designer of the RISD chair could move back and forth so freely between Egypt and Greece and Rome indicates the availability of a wide range of source material. In this regard the encyclopedias of ornament and design which began to be published in the middle of the 19th century by the Germans, the French, and the English must not be overlooked. Of all of them, Owen Jones's *Grammar of Ornament* (London, 1856) was the most influential, at least in the English-speaking world, and its colored lithographic plates of the lotus blossom might well have served as a source of inspiration for this motif on the RISD chair.

Three other armchairs identical to RISD's have come to light, along with a set of four side chairs, except that all their cherry surfaces have been ebonized.² Unfortunately, none of them appears to have a history which would allow the entire group to be ascribed to a particu-

lar city, let alone a particular shop. However, the chairs probably date from the 1870s when Egyptian Revival furniture, and even entire rooms, became popular in response to the opening in 1869 of the Suez Canal, and the performance of Verdi's *Aida* two years later at the opening of the Cairo Opera House. If it eventually turns out that these chairs were not made until the 1880s, then the erection of Cleopatra's Needle in New York's Central Park in 1880 would have served as an additional catalyst for their creation. One of the most complete examples of a surviving Egyptian Revival room is at Cedar Hill in East Greenwich, Rhode Island, the country estate of Alfred Reed, Jr., and dates from 1874.³ A similarly decorated room might well have served as the original context for RISD's armchair.

CPM

1. Dr. Florence Friedman, curator of antiquities at the RISD Museum, gave the writer several helpful suggestions on the original sources and meanings of the decorative motifs found on this chair.
2. Of the three virtually identical armchairs, one is at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, the second is at the High Museum in Atlanta (Hanks and Peirce 1983, p. 85), and the third belonged to Eugene Canton (Fitzgerald 1982, p. 231). The four side chairs are illustrated in a brochure published by Lyndhurst Corporation (New York, n.d., p. 5).
3. Marcus Binney, "Cedar Hill, East Greenwich, Rhode Island, The Home of Mrs. Monterey Holst," *Country Life*, v. 179 (April 3, 1986), pp. 861–66.

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SOFA, ca. 1875
Probably New York City
Ebonized wood with incised gilt decoration. 43 x 68 x 32 x 17 (seat height)
Anonymous gift. 84.228

Provenance:

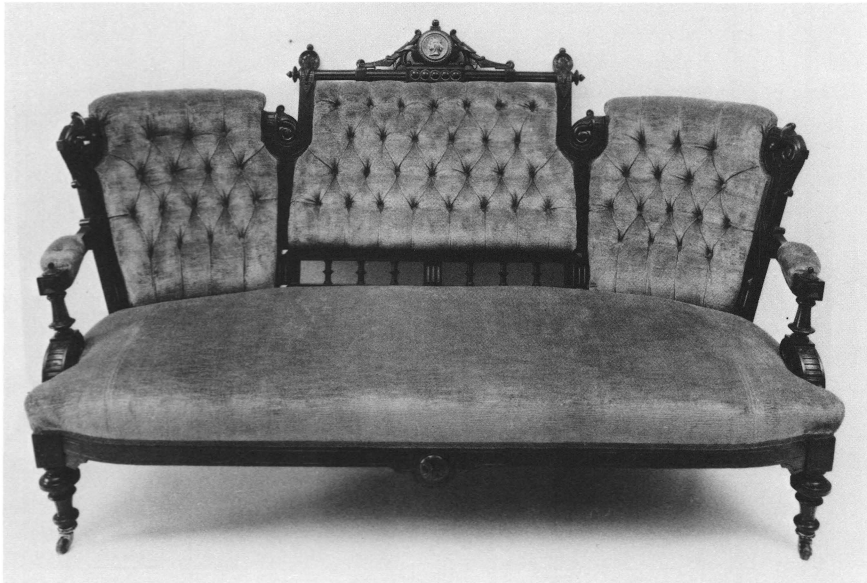
Probably Jacob Cram, Middletown, Rhode Island, ca. 1875; to the Sturtevant heirs (Commodore Edgar House, Newport, Rhode Island); purchased at auction in Newport, ca. 1980 by the donor

Condition:

Re-upholstered in 1985 by David Masterson, Pawtucket, Rhode Island, through the generosity of Pauline C. Metcalf. The green velvet material and style of upholstery replicate what was on the sofa when it came into the Museum in 1984.

Rococo Revival parlor suites by John Henry Belter similar to the preceding example (cat. 135) started to go out of fashion at the beginning of the Civil War in favor of ones in the Louis XVI Revival style. This sofa, originally *en suite* with a pair of massive armchairs now in a private collection, is a late example of that style, and seems in fact to be verging on the Renaissance Revival. In the course of the stylistic transformation from Rococo to Louis XVI, cabriole legs gave way to trumpet-turned legs, while robust naturalistic carving of flowers and fruit became increasingly flat and geometric through the use of incised angular lines and applied circular medallions. The latter were made of either porcelain (cat. 54), mother-of-pearl, or in this instance gilt metal, and frequently incorporated profile portraits of women. As the manufacturers of Louis XVI parlor suites often used code names in their catalogues, such as "Marie Antoinette," "Grand Duchess," and "Pompadour," there may originally have been a correspondence between the particular likeness found on the medallion, and the name of the suite. The identity of the profile portrait of a woman with a bird nesting in her ringlet hair in the medallion on RISD's sofa has thus far proved elusive, and therefore can throw no light on a possible name for the suite of which this sofa formed the focal point.

One furniture manufacturer of Louis XVI parlor suites who used such code names was J. W. Hamburger of New York City. A rare 1874 catalogue for that firm, now in the library of the Margaret Woodbury Strong Museum in Rochester, New York, illustrates numerous suites with



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sofas comparable to the one at RISD. While it is impossible to ascertain from the illustrations whether or not Hamburger actually made RISD's sofa, the catalogue suggests that it was mass produced with a middle-class market in mind, and that in the course of production its manufacturer had employed the principle of interchangeable parts whereby he could offer a number of variations at a comparatively reasonable cost. Not only did these variations occur in the design of the frame and its applied ornament, but also in the type and style of upholstery. While the backs were generally tufted, and the innerspring seats left plain, as seen in the RISD sofa's upholstery treatment, several suites are illustrated by Hamburger with a broad panel of contrasting ruffled material (often silk) along the front of the seat, and further defined along their top edge by a silk cord. This particular treatment has rarely survived, given its rather vulnerable location and the fragility of silk.¹ However, a miniature couch also dating from the 1870s in RISD's collection has this upholstery treatment still intact, and therefore serves as an invaluable document for how RISD's sofa may have originally appeared (fig. a). The miniature sofa, obviously intended for a doll, is upholstered in a tufted red brocatelle fabric with a rep weave, and outlined along its top edge with silk cord.

Such an elaborate upholstery treatment hardly conveys a sense of comfort, nor does the sofa's tripartite back, which clearly defines the zones for seating and the distance to be kept between the persons unfortunate enough to find themselves seated upon it. As early as 1857 Calvert Vaux in *Villas and Cottages*

discussed the shortcomings inherent in the design of sofas made for parlor suites, and as they still seem to apply to the RISD sofa more than a decade later, his message appears to have gone unheeded:

A sofa, by courtesy so called, occupies irrevocably a well-defined space against the wall, but it is just too short to lie down on, and too high and slippery, with its spring, convex seat, to sit on with comfort. It is also cleverly managed that points or knobs (of course

ornamental and French polished) shall occur at all those places toward which a weary head would naturally tend, if leaning back to snatch a few moments' repose from fatigue. The sofa is, indeed, the "representative" man of the room, and concentrates in itself the whole spirit of discomfort that reigns unmolested in every square foot of the apartment.²

Even if the design of the RISD sofa does not suggest comfort, its angular and often agitated silhouette was certainly in keeping with its original context, which appears to have been the Jacob Cram house in Middletown, Rhode Island, designed by Dudley Newton in 1871–72.³ Because of the eruptive picturesqueness of its architecture, so akin to RISD's sofa, Vincent Scully has made the Cram house the flagship for his "Stick Style" (Downing and Scully 1952, pl. 179).
CPM

1. Katherine Grier, Assistant Historian, Margaret Woodbury Strong Museum, Rochester, New York, provided the writer with several helpful suggestions on how the sofa might originally have been upholstered.
2. Calvert Vaux, *Villas and Cottages* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1857), p. 84.
3. This information was supplied by the donor.



Fig. 137a
Doll's couch, American, ca. 1870,
Mahogany. 12¼ x 21 x 9. Museum Works
of Art. 43.176

TILTING OR OSCILLATING CHAIR,
ca. 1880

Eldridge J. Smith (fl. 1872–1886)
Washington, D.C.

Black walnut with burl veneer; iron.
35 x 21¾ x 24½ x 15½ (seat height)
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Joseph K. Ott.
84.212.3

Provenance:

Christie's, New York, sale 5370 (June 2,
1983), lot 122

Condition:

Portions of veneer are missing from the
crest rail, along with the skirt board from
the seat rail.

Tilting back in one's chair while reading,
smoking, or conversing appears to have
been a popular, and peculiarly American,
pastime in the 19th century. Foreign
visitors such as Charles Dickens in his
American Notes (London, 1842) com-
mented on the tilting habit, while numer-

ous artists recorded the phenomenon,
including Nicolina Calyo in his water-
color of ca. 1840, *Reading Room, Astor
Hotel* (Museum of the City of New York),
and Eastman Johnson in his 1863 oil, *The
Evening Newspaper* (Mead Art Gallery,
Amherst College). Patent furniture spe-
cifically designed for tilting, such as
Eldridge Smith's chair, was both the
offspring of this phenomenon and the
father of its widespread popularity.

The Shakers can take credit for patent-
ing the first tilting chair in America in
1852, and the basic design was in pro-
duction by them as early as 1819. In
order to allow a chair to tilt back without
sliding under the sitter, or without its
back posts damaging carpets and mar-
ring floors, they had devised a wooden
button or ball with a flat bottom and a
round top which fit into a socket hol-
lowed out of the ends of the back posts
and was held in place with a leather
thong. In the course of replacing the
wooden parts with an improved button
tilt joint made out of brass and pewter,

the New Lebanon Shaker, George O.
Donnell, took out the above-mentioned
patent.¹

Although a raft of patents poured
forth for tilting chairs following the Civil
War, they never surpassed the Shakers
for the simplicity of their solution.
Increasingly referred to in the patent
literature as "oscillating chairs," they
range in date from Calvin Smith's patent
of 1868, and William Doremus's patent
of 1872, to H.C. Gildersleeve and M.F.
Grimm's patent of 1876, and finally C.E.
Whittlesley's patent of 1889.² All these
patents for oscillating chairs had in
common legs and feet which remained
stationary regardless of how much tilt the
various mechanisms allowed. On the
RISD chair, the decoratively incised arms
pivot on the bolts which attach them to
the legs, while a catch under the seat
determines the degree of tilt. The other
striking feature of Smith's chair is the use
of reeded slats threaded together on
flexible iron rods which are suspended
like a hammock from the Renaissance
Revival crest rail. It was for this
"Improvement in Chairs" that he was
granted a patent on December 8, 1877.

E.J. Smith's 1880 patent for a rocking
chair, his 1881 patent for a reclining
rocking chair, as well as his 1882 patent
for an opera chair all incorporate the use
of this earlier patent. While Smith also
used his 1877 patent for the seat of the
RISD chair, there is no record of an
oscillating chair being patented by him
at any time, although he may have made
applications for one, as a fragmentary
label affixed beneath the front seat
rail suggests.

Although slats contributed to the
animation of all his chairs, Smith's
fondness for them may also be explained
by an earlier patent of his from 1872 for
wooden and metal stair rods to keep the
stair carpet in place. With the machinery
to produce the stair rods in hand, it then
behooved him to find other ways to make
use of the same elements. In designing a
wide range of seating furniture which
required slats instead of upholstery,
Eldridge J. Smith found a solution that
was both creative and pragmatic.

CPM



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1. Charles R. Muller and Timothy D. Rieman, *The Shaker Chair* (Canal Winchester, Ohio: The Canal Press, 1984), pp. 158–62.
2. *Index of Patents*, Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1868–1889.

ARMCHAIR, 1880–83
 Sypher & Co. (1867–1908)
 New York City
 Mahogany; pine slip seat. 41 x 29¾ x
 24 x 17 (seat height)
 Bequest of Commander William Davis
 Miller. 59.253

Provenance:

Purchased from Sypher & Co. by Dr.
 Thomas Mawney Potter (1814–1890),
 Kingston, Rhode Island; to his sister,
 Mary E. Potter (d. 1901); to her nephew,
 James Brown Mason Potter Jr. (d. 1916);
 from whom it was acquired by the donor

Condition:

The slip seat was reupholstered in
 leather shortly before coming to the
 Museum.

Although American furniture manufacturers appear to have missed a unique opportunity to make faithful copies of Queen Anne, Chippendale, Hepplewhite, and Sheraton furniture for display at the 1876 Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia, their English counterparts did not. According to the *Official Catalogue of the British Section*, James Shoolbred & Co. of London displayed “four suites of furniture in the Jacobean and Queen Anne styles,” while Wright & Mansfield, also of London, displayed “Cabinet Furniture of the 18th century.”¹ A writer for *The American Architect and Building News* of January 13, 1877, particularly praised the latter firm for showing “what could be done in this way [of 18th-century reproduction furniture] by people with good understanding.”² Such an observation, however, did not fall on deaf ears, judging from the American-made facsimiles of 18th-century furniture that began to appear shortly thereafter, of which this Chippendale armchair by Sypher & Co. of New York City is an early example.

As the pioneer dealers in bric-a-brac in New York City, Sypher & Co. could trace their origins back to 1840.³ With the increasing demand for “old furniture” in the wake of the 1876 Centennial, the firm established a four-story structure “where a large force of hands, averaging one hundred,” were employed to respond to the need.⁴ On the subject of reproductions, the head of the firm, Obadiah Sypher, was most forthright:

My strict principle is to sell goods for what they are, copies if they are copies, originals when I am lucky enough to find any. But good, faithful, honest copies are of such worth in the market

that they do not need being presented, and passed for what they are not.⁵

And in order to assist his clients in bridging the gap between the commercial showroom and the interiors of their own homes, Sypher came up with the then novel idea of arranging a series of room displays in the basement gallery of his new building at 860 Broadway in 1884. The Colonial Revival interior depicted in an 1882 advertisement may throw light on their appearance (fig. a). In it, Martha Washington is portrayed seated in front of an “Adams” fireplace in a Chippendale armchair similar to the RISD example.⁶

On the basis of the label attached to the inside of the rear seat rail of the RISD chair, with Sypher’s address given as 739 Broadway, it can be dated between 1880 and 1883 (fig. b). A Roman numeral IV scored on the inside of the seat rail and underside of the slip seat suggests it was originally part of a larger set when purchased by Thomas Mawney Potter from Sypher & Co., at either their New York address, or their recently opened shop in the Casino on Bellevue Avenue in Newport. As the chair was destined for Potter’s Kingston, Rhode Island, home, which already contained several 18th-century Chippendale chairs, including a pair now at RISD (cat. 112), he would



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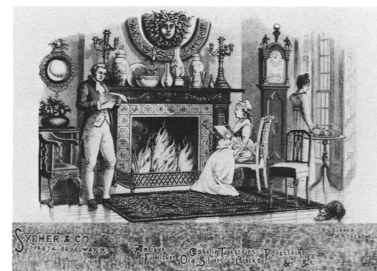


Fig. 139a
 Advertisement from *Art Exhibit of Fashion*,
 Parker & Tilton, pubs., 1882. (Private
 collection)

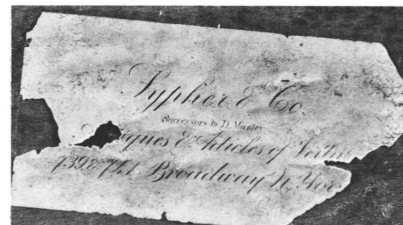


Fig. 139b
 Cabinetmaker's label on inside of rear
 seat rail.

probably have been more rigorous in his quest for faithful reproductions than most of his contemporaries, and this would explain why the Sypher chair particularly appealed to him.⁷

Unlike other Colonial Revival reproductions, including some by Sypher & Co., the RISD chair is totally indebted to Philadelphia for its overall design and its individual decorative motifs.⁸ Such features as the scrolled ears and arm-rests, the triple-fluted stiles, the shell on the front seat rail, the acanthus carving on the knees of the cabriole legs, the claw-and-ball feet, and the rear stump legs are all consistent with those found on actual 18th-century Philadelphia Chippendale chairs. This is also the case with the design of the back, except that it is a conflation of three distinct types of Philadelphia chairs: the floating rope-and-tassel motif would never have been used originally in conjunction with a ruffled orifice, let alone an interlaced Gothic splat.

Upon closer scrutiny, the chair also reveals that a number of shortcuts were taken in its execution, especially when compared to period examples in the Metropolitan Museum of Art (Heckscher 1985, p. 109), the Philadelphia Art Museum (Kirk 1972, p. 79), and Chipstone (Rodriguez Roque 1984, p. 137). To begin with, the carving of the ruffled orifice is flat and mechanical, while the incised lines on the reticulated splat are too sharp and deep, bringing to mind similar incised decoration found on "Eastlake" furniture of the same date. The triple flutes on the stiles do not stop just above and below the point of contact with the arms, but are continuous. The tonguelike arm supports have been replaced by ones with a simplified cyma curve. The shoe which accommodates the bottom of the splat has not been cut out to form a narrow rectangular slot, but rather treated as a narrow channel running from end to end. The flat arches have been eliminated from the skirt of the seat rail. And finally, the side rails have not been tenoned all the way through the stiles. But in spite of these shortcomings, the period proportions and the consistent use of Philadelphia Chippendale details have produced a chair which is remarkable for its historical correctness, particularly given the vacuum which existed only a few years before at the time of the Centennial Exhibition.

CPM

1. *Official Catalogue of the British Section* (London, 1876), pp. 156–57.
2. "Decorative Fine-Art Work at Philadelphia: American Furniture," *American Architect and Building News*, v. 2 (January 13, 1877), p. 12. The lack of reproductions of 18th-century furniture in the displays of American manufacturers at the Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia was first noted by Rodris Roth, "The Colonial Revival and 'Centennial Furniture,'" *The Art Quarterly*, v. 27, no. 1 (1964), pp. 57–81. Also see Rodris Roth, "Pieces of History, Relic Furniture of the Nineteenth Century," *Antiques*, v. 101 (May 1972), pp. 874–78.
3. "Bric-a-Brac," *The Curio*, v. 1, no. 2 (October 1887), p. 192.
4. "Sypher & Co.," *Illustrated New York: The Metropolis of To-Day* (New York, 1888), p. 102.
5. "Bric-a-Brac," *op. cit.*, p. 193.
6. For a description of Sypher's room displays, see Sypher & Co., pub., *The Housekeeper's Quest: Where to Find Pretty Things* (New York, 1885), p. 20. The illustration for the Sypher & Co. advertisement appears in Parker & Tilton, pubs., *Art Exhibit of Fashion*, v. 10 (1882), n.p.
7. Miller 1935, p. 45.
8. A Sypher & Co. kneehole desk combining decorative elements from Boston, New York and Philadelphia is illustrated in Parke-Bernet sale 2277 (April 24–25, 1964), p. 59, lot 306.

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ARMCHAIR, ca. 1886

Possibly William B. Savage (fl. 1880s)
Boston, Massachusetts
Red oak, basswood, butternut, soft maple, white pine, and ash, stained to resemble mahogany. 39 x 19 x 19 x 17 (seat height)
Gift of Elizabeth Morris Smith in memory of her mother, Alletta Natalie Lorillard Bailey Morris. 78.157

Provenance:


The Lewis Gouverneur Morris family;
by bequest to the donor

Publication:

Christopher Monkhouse, "The Spinning Wheel as Artifact, Symbol, and Source of Design," *Victorian Furniture*, Kenneth L. Ames, ed. (Philadelphia: Victorian Society in America, 1982), p. 162.

The rediscovery of the spinning wheel within the context of the Colonial Revival can be largely attributed to the publication in 1858 of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's highly popular *The Courtship of Miles Standish*. When Priscilla Mullins asked John Alden to speak for himself in the third canto, the wheel at which she had been spinning was transformed in the mind of the reader from a symbol of female bondage into a relic shrouded in romance. As a result, spinning wheels which had not seen the light of day since

"So as she sat at her wheel one afternoon in the autumn,
Alden, who opposite sat, and was watching her
dexterous fingers,
As if the thread she was spinning were that of his
life and his fortune."—LONGFELLOW.



A BEAUTIFUL WEDDING OR BIRTHDAY PRESENT.

THE OLD FLAX SPINNING WHEEL CHAIR.

In its construction every part of the wheel is used.

Novel, Artistic, Durable.

Made in Oak and Cherry.....	\$20 00
Made in Mahogany.....	25 00
Made in Gilt.....	40 00

LIBERAL DISCOUNT TO THE TRADE.

WM. B. SAVAGE,
No. 43 West Street, Boston, Mass.

Fig. 140a
Advertisement from *The Decorator and Furnisher*, 1886. (Private collection)



they had been consigned to the attic at the outset of the Industrial Revolution now re-emerged for display as prized antiques by the fireplace. In the event they were incomplete, a Boston chair-maker, William B. Savage, hit upon the idea of recycling the parts to create a novel form of seating furniture, the spinning wheel chair.¹ From September 1886 through October 1887, Savage advertised his spinning wheel chair in the influential trade journal, *The Decorator and Furnisher*. The following editorial comment accompanied the publication of his first advertisement to appear there:

It would seem that ingenuity must have exhausted itself in devising new patterns for chairs. It has remained, however, for a Boston manufacturer to invent a style as novel and interesting as it is pretty and serviceable. Mr. William B. Savage, of Boston, has evolved from the complex formation of the old-fashioned flax spinning wheel a really charming arm chair. Every portion of the wheel is used and so perfectly are the parts adjusted that it would seem that the only original intention was to make an arm chair, and that a spinning wheel was never thought of. The wheel is used for the

back, the standard for the arms and legs, the treadle supports the legs midway between the seat and floor, and the head of the wheel, the portion on which the flax is wound, is set in the back of the chair. Altogether the idea is pretty and novel and the chair is strong, durable and handsome.

The advertisement (fig. a) explicitly links the spinning wheel chair to Longfellow's *Courtship*, with the following lines from that poem quoted at the top of each ad: "So as she sat at her wheel one afternoon in the autumn, / Alden, who opposite sat, and was watching her dextrous fingers / As if the thread she was spinning were that of his life and fortune." This association of the spinning wheel with courtship made the spinning wheel chair a suitable wedding present; the advertisement also suggests that some of these chairs were intended for use in formal settings. The most expensive model could be purchased for \$40.00 in gilt.

Of the several spinning wheel chairs which have come to light, the RISD example has the distinction of bearing the closest resemblance to the one depicted in the Savage advertisement, and it may well be from his shop. The most notable difference is that the RISD chair lacks a flyer for a crest rail

ornament, and the seat appears to be shaped somewhat differently. As the other spinning wheel chairs which have been found vary so considerably in their execution, not to mention their provenance, such as a bench with a four-wheel back found in Chicago,² it is unlikely that most of them came from Savage's shop, although his advertisement may have served as the source of inspiration. Furthermore, long before Savage is known to have made his first spinning wheel chair, Walter Corey & Co., well-known furniture manufacturers and retailers in Portland, Maine (see cat. 132), utilized in 1878 the wheel support from an old spinning wheel for the pedestal of a table made up of various relics associated with the poet John Greenleaf Whittier. According to an article in *The Portland Transcript* for August 31 of that year, the spinning wheel which served as the source of the table's pedestal had been used by Whittier's mother, and perhaps her ancestors, and was the very one alluded to in his poem of 1866, *Snow Bound; A Winter Idyl*.³

If the RISD spinning wheel chair was indeed made by William B. Savage, then it never strayed very far from Boston, having formed part of the furnishings of Malbone, a stone Gothic Revival summer house built in Newport in 1849 from the designs of Alexander Jackson Davis (Jordy and Monkhouse 1982, pp. 57–59). In the days of the donor's mother, Alletta Natalie Lorillard Bailey Morris, it saw service by the telephone in the upstairs hall. According to Mrs. Morris's daughter, Elizabeth Morris Smith, nobody ever spent much time on the phone owing to the chair's built-in lack of comfort.

CPM

1. For a detailed discussion of the development of the spinning wheel chair, see Christopher Monkhouse, "The Spinning Wheel as Artifact, Symbol, and Source of Design," *Victorian Furniture*, Kenneth L. Ames, ed. (Philadelphia: Victorian Society in America, 1982), pp. 154–72.
2. This bench was owned by Harvey Antiques, Evanston, Illinois, in the autumn of 1985.
3. Earle G. Shettleworth and William D. Barry, "Walter Corey's Furniture Manufactory in Portland, Maine," *Antiques*, v. 121 (May 1982), p. 1204.

ARMCHAIR, ca. 1886 (one of three)
James E. Wall (fl. 1881–1917)
Boston, Massachusetts
Imported bamboo, with lacquer panel.
45³/₈ x 22 x 25 x 18¹/₂ (seat height)
Anonymous gift. 82.111.1

Provenance:

Originally acquired by Henry Pearce
(1839–1909) for his summer house on
Warwick Neck, Rhode Island; to his
daughter Helen P. Merriman, Provi-
dence, (d. 1971)

Publications:

Museum Notes, RISD, 1983, p. 22; *The
Decorative Arts Society Newsletter*, v. 11
(December 1985), p. 5.

Exhibitions:

*In Pursuit of Beauty: Americans and the
Aesthetic Movement*, Metropolitan
Museum of Art, New York, 1986, cat.
5.19.

When Henry Pearce, a private banker from Providence, acquired three armchairs for his summer house on nearby Warwick Neck in the 1880s, bamboo was an obvious choice. First introduced to Providence at the beginning of the 19th century in the context of the China Trade by such leading merchants as Edward Carrington and Sullivan Dorr, and for that matter Henry Pearce's own ancestor Captain Nathaniel Pearce, a renewed enthusiasm for bamboo occurred through the display of Oriental wares from China and Japan at the 1876 Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia, followed by the publication of *Art Furniture Designed by Edward Godwin* in London in 1878.¹ The tastemaker and art critic Clarence Cook in his influential *House Beautiful* (New York, 1878) called bamboo furniture "capital stuff... to fill up the gaps in the furnishings of a country house for a summer." Aside from its obvious "aesthetic" appeal, he noted that it had "the merit of being strongly made and easily kept clean" (pp. 74–75).

Pearce could have bought bamboo furniture actually made in Japan or China through such American retailers as Vantine's New York Emporium, or imitation bamboo furniture fashioned out of various woods including bird's-eye maple from such furniture manufacturers as Blake & Alden of Boston, or Kilian Brothers of New York. Instead, Pearce got the best of both worlds by buying furniture made out of imported bamboo from India, China, and Japan, but designed and assembled in America.

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Two such makers of bamboo furniture in this country were Nimura & Sato of Brooklyn and James E. Wall of Boston. According to city directories, Wall was listed as a "bamboo worker" at 73 Cornhill from 1881 to 1895; after a brief excursion into stockbroking, he ended up in the wallpaper business, with a specialty in Japanese grass cloth and embossed leather, from 1901 to his death in 1917. When *The Decorator and Furnisher* gave the following detailed description of this maker's wares in its December, 1886 issue, it also illustrated two pieces of his bamboo furniture, including an armchair nearly identical to the RISD chairs (fig. a):

Bamboo furniture is always in demand among people of artistic tastes. Mr. James E. Wall, 73 Cornhill, Boston, Mass., sends out a catalogue with illustrations of articles in bamboo that deserve special attention. There are charming portfolio stands, tables that are unique and pretty, bamboo curtain poles that cannot fail to please every lady of taste, especially for chambers, morning rooms, summer houses and cottages. Screens in various sizes are handsomely finished and come in any number of panels required. Swinging or stationary fire screens in various

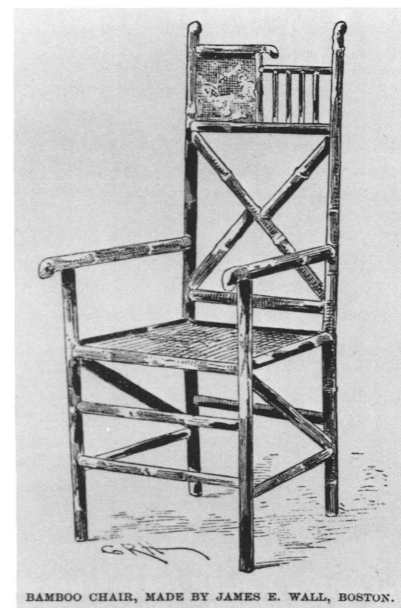


Fig. 141a
Advertisement from *The Decorator and
Furnisher*, 1886. (Private collection)

styles, bamboo chairs extremely odd and pretty, tables that are particularly suitable for magazines and papers. Easels in great variety from a size suitable for holding cards to full length that may be made practical use of by artists. There are also banner stands and other ornamental articles in bamboo, and Mr. Wall will furnish to order any article from any practical design that may be submitted to him. (p. 106)

The three RISD chairs purchased by Pearce are essentially alike, with the exception of a lacquer panel which has been incorporated into the crest rail of only two of them, including the one illustrated here. Its arresting placement on the left side of the crest rail endows the chair with an asymmetry characteristic of Japanese design, whether it be furniture, ceramics, textiles or prints. However, due to the downward turn of the crest rail, repeated again in the handrest of the chair's arms, the chair turns inward on itself in a circular motion which produces a balanced composition. CPM

1. Chinese bamboo furniture imported by Edward Carrington is now in the collection of the Rhode Island Historical Society, while two Chinese bamboo armchairs possibly owned by Sullivan Dorr are at RISD (47.728a, b).

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ARMCHAIR, 1888

Sydney Burleigh (1853–1931)
Providence, Rhode Island
Yellow-poplar, stained. 44½ x 26 x 21⅝ x 17 (seat height)
Gift of Professor Zenas Bliss, on behalf of the A.E. Club, Providence, Rhode Island. 79.072

Exhibition:

The Quest for Unity, American Art between World's Fairs, 1876–1893, The Detroit Institute of Arts, 1983, (cat. 91).

Condition:

The surface is somewhat weathered.

This tombstone chair, and a nearly identical one now in a private collection, were made in 1888 by the leading exponent of the Arts and Crafts movement in Rhode Island, Sydney Burleigh, in collaboration with his good friend John

Aldrich, as partial fulfillment of the requirements for membership in the A.E. Club in Providence. Founded in 1885, the club's initials stood for "Ann Eliza," whose name served as a pun on the fact that its forty members engaged in the "analysis" of art during their fortnightly meetings. In 1935 a member of the A.E. Club, Walter Munro, compiled a brief history which makes reference to these two tombstone chairs:

Every member was expected to contribute a chair, the more antique the better, and a stein. Sidney (sic) Burleigh and Jack Aldrich, collaborating, produced the two highly realistic tombstone chairs. . . While our new kitchen chairs have utility they would have been anathema in those days.¹

Although primarily a painter, Burleigh in the course of his career experimented with architecture, interior decoration, furniture (cats. 5, 6), wrought



iron, and even ceramics on occasion. Another organization in which Burleigh was active almost from its inception in 1880, the Providence Art Club, possesses an ebonized wood seaman's chest made by him as early as 1883. On one of its slanted surfaces he carved in low relief a portrait of the patron saint of art, St. Luke. As with the later tombstone chairs, its handcrafted qualities have been emphasized through rudimentary construction and crude surface decoration in order to reflect the Arts and Crafts ideals to which he so ardently subscribed.

Beginning in England with William Morris in the 1850s, this movement sought to restore the craftsman to his rightful role as both designer and maker, thereby eliminating the piece-work system which drained the creative process of its integrity and originality. To underline still further his allegiance to English Arts and Crafts ideals, the decorating firm which Burleigh organized about 1886, along with John Aldrich and Walter Stetson, took for its name "Art Workers Guild." An Arts and Crafts organization by the same name already existed in London, having been founded just a couple of years before by among others, William Morris.

As for the chairs themselves, the backs are quite literal translations of New England tombstones. Perhaps in response to the A.E. Club's request that "they be more antique," the design of John Aldrich's unillustrated chair is derived from a typical 18th-century stone with a scalloped crest and a winged angel's head carved on its surface, along with the epitaph "REQUIESCAT/IN/PACE/JA/AE 88." The back of Burleigh's chair takes its inspiration from an equally typical stone of the early 19th century, consisting of a crest of three round arches. Carved on the surface of the central arch is a familiar graveside scene of a bereaved woman under a weeping willow tree. In the somewhat smaller flanking arches rosettes appear, in this instance rather more Oriental than New England in character. Burleigh's epitaph completes the decoration: "IN/MEMORY/OF/S.R.B./DID/APRIL 22, 1888/ whose name was writ." The latter part of this inscription is presumably a reference to the epitaph found on the grave of John Keats in the Protestant Cemetery in Rome, which reads: "Here Lies One whose name was writ in Water." Inscribed on the back of Burleigh's chair are the letters "RIP" for "Rest in Peace."

Despite the apparently simplistic plank construction of these two chairs in stained yellow-poplar, their design is quite

remarkable, and seems to anticipate the tall-back chairs of Frank Lloyd Wright and Charles Rennie Mackintosh from a decade later.³ Furthermore, their raked plank backs, extended seats and flat plank armrests bring to mind two classics of 20th-century design: Henry Lee's Westport chair of 1902, taking its name from the New York resort where its "inventor" from Boston made the first example;⁴ and Gerrit Rietveld's "Red-blue chair" of 1917. Interesting as it is to find examples which embody aspects of the design of these chairs at a later date, and quite independently of them, Burleigh's source of inspiration has yet to be determined. It is possible that the New England tombstone was inspiration enough for building an entire armchair around it, especially as such stones are frequently found standing in cemeteries at a raked angle.

CPM

1. Walter L. Munro, *Early History of A.E. Club* (Providence, 1935), p. 4 (typescript copy kept with other A.E. Club papers at the library of the Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence, Rhode Island).
2. George L. Miner, *Angell's Lane* (Providence, 1948), p. 157. For a further discussion of the decorative aspects of Burleigh's work, see Edgar Kaufman, Jr., "Some American Architectural Ornament of the Arts and Crafts Era," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, v. 24 (December 1965), pp. 285-91.
3. David Hanks in his catalogue entry for this chair in the 1983 exhibition at The Detroit Institute of Arts also notes the close formal correspondence between this chair and some of Wright's designs.
4. Information on the Westport chair was kindly given to the writer by Craig Gilborn, director, Adirondack Museum, Blue Mountain Lake, New York, who is writing a book on rustic furniture.

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STOOL, 1924-26
Wallace Nutting (1861-1941)
Framingham, Massachusetts
Maple. 19 x 18
Museum purchase. 26.428.1

Condition:

Rush seat restored about 1970 through the generosity of Miss Sophia Vervena.

Wallace Nutting had had close ties with the American furniture collection at the Museum ever since 1904, when he assisted at the funeral of Charles Pendleton while serving as a Congregational minister in Providence. Shortly thereafter, Nutting commenced a new career as a commercial photographer, with Colonial interiors as one of his specialties (see p. 45). When the Museum in the teens started making plans for a series of period rooms in addition to Pendleton House, Nutting's photographs supplied many helpful hints on how best to arrange them. For the furnishing of these projected but ultimately unrealized rooms the Museum again turned to Nutting, who by this time was an antique dealer, and he sold it several 17th-century pieces, including a "Carver" chair (cat. 85). In his capacity as a lecturer, he spoke at the Museum in the 1920s, while as an author of books on American furniture, he illustrated many examples from the Museum's collection. Therefore, as a manufacturer of fine reproduction furniture, Nutting not surprisingly supplied the set of four "Brewster" stools to the Museum in 1926 when it required gallery seating for the major new addition designed by William T. Aldrich.¹

Nutting had started making furniture reproductions as early as 1917, first in Saugus, Massachusetts, then Ashland, and finally in Framingham. At peak periods before the firm closed in 1936 he employed as many as twenty-five craftsmen, and had between 200 and 300 different patterns in production. Nutting sold his firm and briefly retired from the furniture reproduction business between



Fig. 143a
Manufacturer's brand on underside of
stretcher.



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1922 and 1923. However, he soon became upset over the new owner's lack of concern for quality while still using the Nutting name for marketing purposes. Therefore he sold his own collection of American antiques to J.P. Morgan, Jr. for the Wadsworth Atheneum in Hartford in order to buy back his firm and restore its good name. At this time it would appear that he adopted the practice of branding his furniture with his name in block letters to differentiate it from pieces made under the interim owner. As the RISD "Brewster" stools are so marked (fig. a), they presumably date between 1924 and the time of their purchase in 1926.²

The prototype for Nutting's "Brewster" stool was a turned triangular stool with rush seat in the Bolles collection in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, reproduced in Luke Vincent Lockwood's *Colonial Furniture in America* (New York, 1921, v. 2, p. 6). The illustration in Lockwood shows that Nutting remained faithful to the original, both in proportion and detail. However, he did take liberties with the name "Brewster" under which he sold this design. On the strength of the stool having decorative spindles under its seat, he allied it in name with William Brewster, whose turned great chair in Pilgrim Hall in Plymouth, Massachusetts, also made extensive use of spindles, including under its seat.³ In fact, Nutting produced a fairly accurate reproduction of the

Brewster chair itself, and realizing that he was onto a good thing, expanded his "Brewster" line to include beds with spindles incorporated into both their head- and footboards.⁴

The RISD "Brewster" stools, purchased for \$12.00 each, initially saw service in the four corners of the Museum's main gallery where they frequently appear in early installation photographs. At some point they fell out of favor, and ended up as office furniture. But having survived the critical first fifty years, they were formally accessioned by the Museum for the permanent collection in 1985.

CPM

1. Museum Committee, *Minutes*, April 6, 1926. The Brewster stool appears in Nutting's advertisement in *Antiques*, v. 9 (June 1926), p. 448; and in the seventh edition of Nutting's *Catalog* (Framingham, Massachusetts, 1928), p. 18.
2. For a recent study of Nutting, see William L. Dulaney, "Wallace Nutting, Collector and Entrepreneur," *Winterthur Portfolio*, v. 13 (1979), pp. 47–60. Also useful is Wallace Nutting, *Wallace Nutting's Biography* (Framingham, Massachusetts, 1936).
3. Pizer et al, 1985, pp. 1112–20.
4. Wallace Nutting, *Catalog* (Framingham, Massachusetts, 1928), pp. 5, 54.

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STOOL, 1982

Tage Frid (b. 1915)

North Kingstown, Rhode Island
(b. Denmark)

Walnut. 30 x 19 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 14 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 22 (seat height)

Gift of the RISD Class of 1982. 82.178

Provenance:

The artist

While this three-legged stool immediately brings to mind the back stool of Medieval Europe, its Danish-trained designer and maker, Tage Frid, gives a less exotic source of inspiration for it in *Tage Frid Teaches Woodwork: Book III, Furniture Making* (Newtown, Connecticut: The Taunton Press, 1985):

The whole thing started when my wife and I went to a horse show. We were sitting on a 6-in.-wide rail for several hours, yet we felt quite comfortable. Of course, I am well upholstered; Emma is just right, but she didn't complain either. Suddenly I realized that when you sit on a wooden seat, you sit only on your two cheek bones. The rest of the seat is unnecessary. Obviously, a full seat allows freedom for moving around, unless it is carved to hold you in place, but mainly a small area of seat supports you. (p. 145)

Realizing that only a minimal seating area is required for support, roughly a board 16" x 6" with a $\frac{5}{8}$ " curve, and that additional comfort can be achieved by a low back to accommodate the bottom of the spine, Frid mortised two boards together to form a T, and then dovetailed onto the far end a short board with a cut-out handle to form the low back. The three splayed legs which support the seat are attached to it by through-tenons, as is the T-shaped stretcher for the legs, with one wedge in the center of each through-tenon.

Frid made three prototypes for his three-legged stool in 1964, each identical except in height. RISD's stool is based on the tallest, with a seat height of 22"; a medium stool intended as a dining chair has a seat height of 18", and the shortest model a seat height of 13". The only other variable has been in the selection of wood, with cherry on occasion substituted for walnut; in either case the dark wood enables the stool to make a strong formal statement. Frid estimates that since 1964 he has made a total of twenty-five, including a pair similar to RISD's for the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, in

1979. The utter simplicity of the forms, methods, and materials, combined with rational proportions and a concern for comfort, ally Frid's three-legged stool with the best of modern Danish design.

The significance of this stool within the Museum's collection is enhanced by the fact that Tage Frid headed the wood-working program at RISD from 1962 to 1985. In recognition of his many contributions to fine woodworking through his teaching, publications, and furniture, the RISD Class of 1982 commissioned Frid to make this three-legged stool for the per-

manent collection of the Museum.
CPM

1. Information from the artist. For a further discussion of the three-legged stool, see Tage Frid, "Three-Legged Stool Designed around the Construction," *Fine Woodworking*, v. 2 (Summer 1977), pp. 35–37. In that article the heights of the seats were published incorrectly as 12", 16", and 21" respectively. Also see Fairbanks and Bates 1981, p. 571.



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COMB-BACK WINDSOR ARMCHAIR,

1755–75

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Maple, ash, poplar. 46 x 28 x 16½ x 17
(seat height)

Gift of the Estate of Mrs. Gustav Radeke.
31-579

Provenance:

Arthur Leslie Green, Newport, Rhode Island, from whom purchased by the donor in 1916 for \$30

Condition:

The present black paint covers older coats of white and traces of dark green. A hole for a commode has been cut through the center of the plank seat, which was subsequently covered with sheets of tin and upholstered with a jacquard woven cloth.

The earliest references to American-made Windsor chairs occurred in Philadelphia around 1750 (Goyne 1969, p. 538). "High-back'd" chairs were among the early chair types mentioned, and this imposing comb-back armchair represents a classic example of this form. The name derives from the resemblance of the chair's back to a hair comb with long teeth. The lower portion is essentially the same as a "low-back'd" chair (cat. 146), another of the early chair designs first produced in Philadelphia. Among the distinctive features of such early Philadelphia Windsor chairs are the tall crest rail with large volutes at either end, the D-shaped seat, and legs with straight-sided cylindrical turnings ending in ball feet. With the arm supports set vertically at the front corners of the seat and the spindles evenly spaced, the steam-bent arm rail creates a deep, semi-circular enclosure. The embrasure of the tall comb back and curving crest rail comes as close to providing the comfort of an easy chair as is possible for an unupholstered chair. Perhaps for this reason, this chair was once equipped as a commode chair, the hole now covered with a jacquard woven cloth.

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LOW-BACK WINDSOR ARMCHAIR,

1750–70

Rhode Island

Maple. 28½ x 27 x 16 x 15½ (seat height)

Gift of the Estate of Mrs Gustav Radeke.

31.434

Provenance:

Purchased at auction by Arthur Leslie Green, Newport, Rhode Island, from whom purchased by the donor in 1922

Publication:

Santore 1981, p. 78, fig. 59.

Condition:

The chair has been stripped of its original light green paint, traces of which remain on the underside of the seat. Also glued to the underside of the seat is a

paper label of the American Railway Express Co., dated Newport, 1922.

Derived from English Windsor armchairs of the 1750s, “low-back’d” chairs are among the earliest types of Windsor chairs mentioned in 18th-century documents and newspaper advertisements. They seem to have been especially popular in Pennsylvania and Rhode Island, although they were made elsewhere throughout New York and New England. Heavier versions were still popular in the mid-19th century, and their descendants, so-called “captain’s” chairs, remain popular even today.

Rhode Island low-back armchairs differ from the standard design found in the other colonies. The arms, for example, are constructed of two curved pieces

that meet in the center beneath the crest rail. By comparison, on chairs made in Pennsylvania and elsewhere, the crest fits between the inner ends of the arms and separates them.¹ A more noticeable difference on Rhode Island low-back chairs and a few comb-backs is the crossed arrangement of the stretchers instead of the more typical “H” pattern. The bases of contemporary Newport roundabout chairs were often similarly constructed and may have served as a model for Windsor chairmakers.² On the other hand, ball feet are much more common on Pennsylvania Windsor chairs and suggest the influence on Rhode Island chairmakers of examples imported from Philadelphia or perhaps England. One refinement peculiar to Rhode Island Windsors is the matching of the vase

turnings on the spindles with the turnings on the arm supports. On Pennsylvania chairs, the spindles are normally left plain. A more subtle detail is the way in which the front corners of the seat flare in response to the outward curve of the arms above.

Unlike most Windsor furniture, this chair is made solely of maple and tiger maple. The legs do not penetrate the seat, as is typical. The pronounced rake of the back legs creates an inclined seat that is well contoured and affords great comfort in combination with the shaped back. A related armchair retains its original leather upholstered seat and brass-headed tacks, an expensive but even more comfortable option.³ Several other related low-back and comb-back chairs are documented to prominent Providence and Newport owners. For example, a pair that belonged to John Brown is owned by a descendant, and another chair branded "S GIBBS R.I." presumably belonged to a member of the Gibbs family of Newport. A comb-back chair in the Redwood Library, Newport, together with five low-back chairs similar to this one, may have been among the original furnishings acquired by the Library in 1764.⁴

TSM

1. See Santore 1981, pp. 75.
2. Downs 1952, nos. 63–64. For a variation attributed to Rhode Island but with open stretchers, see *Antiques*, v. 106 (November 1974), p. 781.
3. Sotheby's sale 5228 (December 8, 1984), lot 332.
4. Sotheby's sale 4942 (October 23, 1982), lot 133. A comb-back chair nearly identical to the Redwood Library's is illustrated in *Antiques*, v. 117 (January 1980), p. 63. See also J. Lloyd Hyde and Lorraine Dexter, "The Furniture of the Library," in *Redwood Papers: A Bicentennial Collection*, ed. by Lorraine Dexter and Alan Pryce-Jones. (Newport: The Redwood Library and Athenaeum, 1976), pp. 85–87.

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FAN-BACK WINDSOR SIDE CHAIR,
1760–90
Rhode Island
Maple, pine, ash. 36 x 21 x 16 x 17½
(seat height)
Gift of Mr. Frank Brownell Bishop.
51.122

Condition:

The chair has been stripped of black paint. The seat has cracked lengthwise in two places, and two cleats have been added to its underside. The legs are bound by braided wire that was probably added in the late 19th century.

In spite of an unfortunate wire truss added in the late 19th century to brace wobbly legs, this fan-back side chair stands out as a superior product of an unknown Rhode Island Windsor chairmaker. The sharp taper at the bottom of the legs is typical of Windsor chairs made in this state, as are the thick rings above the taper and the carved volute in the center of each ear of the crest rail. All the turnings are unusually crisp. The pronounced swelling and tapering of the ogee balusters on the back posts recall the balusters on the Rhode Island turned



chair (cat. 83) and even the balusters of locally made brass andirons, the molds for which were shaped by the same wood turners who supplied rounds to Windsor chairmakers.

TSM

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FAN-BACK WINDSOR SIDE CHAIR,
1780–1800
New England
Maple, pine, ash. 37 x 21½ x 15½ x 17
(seat height)
Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke. 20.961

Provenance:

Arthur Leslie Green, Newport, Rhode Island, from whom purchased by the donor in 1916

Condition:

The present dark green paint is modern and covers an older coat of light green paint.

This late fan-back chair represents an unusual combination of a traditionally shaped crest rail on an up-to-date base with bamboo turnings. The arched crest rail with prominent ears resembles that



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on the previous chair, although this example is somewhat thinner and seems to reflect the chairmaker's awareness of the overall thinness of newer rod-back Windsors. Crudely carved flowers on the ears that take the place of more typical volutes suggest the work of a less skillful carver or perhaps the work of an isolated craftsman who was less bound by the consistency required in larger shops that were engaged in large-scale production.

In her effort to assemble an encyclopedic collection of Windsor furniture, Mrs. Radeke acquired several variations upon a single chair form. She intended them not only to present to students a more complete survey of American design, but also to furnish the sequence of American period rooms that she had planned to install in her new museum.

TSM

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CONTINUOUS-ARM WINDSOR ARMCHAIR,
1775–1800
Probably Connecticut
Oak, ash or hickory, maple, yellow-
poplar.

40½ x 22 x 19 x 17½ (seat height)
Gift of the Estate of Mrs. Gustav Radeke.
31.427

Provenance:
Arthur Leslie Green, Newport, Rhode
Island, from whom purchased by the
donor in 1917

Publications:
Santore 1981, p. 113, fig. 122; Barter
1984, p. 8; *Museum Handbook*, RISD,
1985, p. 320.

Like Gragg's elastic armchair of 1808 (cat. 127), the continuous-arm Windsor armchair was an original American contribution to bentwood technology. The design of the back and arms stretched the properties of wood to their limits and often exceeded them, as the cracks on this chair and the iron braces on the Gragg chair indicate. For example, the curve of the back where it bends to form arms is visually exciting but impractical for bearing any weight. In this instance, the chairmaker further exploited the tensile quality of his materials by selecting unusually thin and attenuated parts.

On other chairs of this kind, stout front arm supports often help to define

the ends of the arms. On this chair, the arm supports are almost as thin as the back spindles and do little visually to tie the thin line of the arms to the lower half of the chair. Likewise, the bamboo swellings on the spindles occur very low in the back, while the side spindles splay outward more than usual, thus enhancing the exceptionally light and airy quality of this chair.

Continuous-arm chairs seem to have been a specialty of New York City chairmakers but were soon imitated by others in Connecticut and Massachusetts (Santore 1981, p. 111). The overall shaping and sharp edges of the seat on this chair are consistent with Connecticut Windsors, as are the bamboo-turned spindles. The apple-green paint is a rare survival that documents an early repainting in the most popular color for Windsor furniture, which was intended for use both inside and out of doors.

TSM

BRACED BOW-BACK WINDSOR ARMCHAIR,
1770–1810
Rhode Island
Maple, ash, pine, mahogany. 39½ x 20 x
18½ x 16 (seat height)
Bequest of Dorothy Metcalf McVay.
84.236

Provenance:

Possibly made for Joel Metcalf (1755–1834) of Providence and inherited by his son Jesse Metcalf (1790–1838); known to have belonged to his son, Franklin Metcalf (1832–1908), Carolina, Rhode Island, to his wife, Alice G. Metcalf (d. 1926); to her daughter, Alice M. McVay (d. 1954); to her husband, William McVay (d. 1959); to his daughter, the donor

Publication:

Museum Notes, RISD, 1985, p. 22.

Condition:

Stripped and refinished. Traces remain of the original dark green paint.

Among the Museum's extensive collection of Windsor furniture, this Rhode Island armchair with mahogany arms stands out as one of the finest examples of this form. Its turnings are unusually well defined, particularly the ogee vase turnings of the legs and the pronounced taper below the stretchers, two salient characteristics of this region's Windsor style. The stretchers themselves are bold in their swelling and tapering. Refinements that distinguish this chair from less skillfully made examples include the curl of the slender arms over the forward arm support and their continuation of the molded edges of the bow back. The gradual diminution of baluster turnings from the arm supports to the spindles and their increasing verticality also enliven the silhouette of the tall back. Mahogany arms, originally left unpainted, provided a degree of refinement not often seen on Windsor armchairs made in other regions.

According to family tradition, this chair was made by a South County chairmaker named Hoxie, a name so common in the records of southern Rhode Island that it is difficult to confirm the activity of a Windsor chairmaker by that name. Several similar chairs, both plain and upholstered, and two sets of eight (MFA) and twelve similar chairs confirm the local popularity of this design and its variants.¹ The set of twelve bears the brand of A.G. Case, a Windsor chairmaker known only to have worked in Norwich, Connecticut, until his death



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in 1828 (Santore 1981, p. 203). They raise the question of whether craftsmen in nearby Connecticut were also producing chairs of this type, or whether Case later moved to Rhode Island and adopted the local Windsor style. The side chairs in the set of eight have an indecipherable stamp believed to read H. Bacon, another maker, or perhaps an owner, who has yet to be identified.

The likely descent of this armchair in the Metcalf family to Franklin Metcalf of Providence and Carolina provides an appealing link with his niece, Eliza Metcalf Radeke, who began around 1916 to assemble for the Museum a collection of approximately seventy-five Windsor settees, cradles, and stools, as well as chairs of varied types from almost every region.

TSM

1. See Greenlaw 1974, nos. 150, 152, and Rodriguez Roque 1984, no. 107. The set of twelve is illustrated in *Antiques*, v. 96 (October 1969), p. 453; the MFA's set of eight appears in *Antiques*, v. 120 (September 1981), p. 597.

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FAN-BACK WINDSOR SIDE CHAIR,
1790–1810
Connecticut
Chestnut, maple, ash. 35 x 18 x 16 x 16
(seat height)
Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke. 20.955

Provenance:

Arthur Leslie Green, Newport, Rhode Island, from whom purchased by the donor in 1916

Publication:

Santore 1981, p. 94, fig. 89.

Condition:

The present dark green paint is modern and covers an older coat of red-brown paint

The substitution of a narrow rod for a shaped crest rail, and the combination of bamboo spindles with traditionally turned back supports indicate a later date for this fan-back chair than the preceding examples. Like the fully developed rod-back chair (cat. 152), the delicate crest with squared corners reflects the influence of formal Federal-period furniture on Windsor chairmakers. The combination of rounds in two different styles, however, creates an unusual junc-



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tion at the upper corners of the back. Instead of the false mitered joint seen on most rod-back chairs, the exposed ends of the crest rod project slightly, as if they were all that remained of a conventional crest rail with flared ears.

Compared to the later rod-back chairs, the swell and taper of the bamboo turnings on the legs and spindles are more pronounced and less numerous. Together with the well-turned back posts and the circular hollow of the seat without an incised border, these features support a Connecticut attribution. The pronounced rake to the back posts may also reflect the maker's familiarity with rod-back chairs, for it gives the chair a much greater sense of lightness than is usually seen on fan-back chairs.

TSM

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ROD-BACK WINDSOR SIDE CHAIR,

1780–1810

New England

Maple, ash, pine. 37½ x 18½ x 17 x 18
(seat height)

Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke. 20.920

Provenance:

Arthur Leslie Green, Newport, Rhode

Island, from whom purchased by the donor in 1916

The popularity of rod-back Windsor chairs in the early 19th century was both a cause and effect of their interchangeable, mass-produced components. The simulated bamboo turnings on this chair required less time and skill to produce than the ring, vase, and baluster turnings on the preceding Windsors. They could be made in much greater quantities by a greater number of craftsmen. In 1804, for example, the shop of William Seaver, a Boston Windsor chairmaker, contained no fewer than 2675 chair legs, 4117 chair "rounds," 565 rounds for backs, 160 "barrs" for backs, 1410 "rounds legs and post," in addition to hundreds of chairs at various stages of completion.¹

Much of the work assembled and sold by Boston chairmakers was in fact produced outside of their shops and often under contract with turners in different parts of the state. In 1810, for example, Joseph Leonard and Solomon Morse of Boston purchased "certain turned stuff, sufficient for 100 bamboo chairs" from John Cook in Winchendon, forty miles or so west of Boston.² Not surprisingly, by 1800 Windsor chairs such as this one retain few attributes of any regional

style and thus represent one of the first national, or perhaps democratic, expressions among the decorative arts.

The lightness and strength of rod-back Windsors and the fact that they could be used in and out of doors, made them ideal for use in large numbers for public or private gatherings. Some chairmakers and cabinetmakers supplemented their businesses by renting Windsor chairs, as indicated by a debt owed by Daniel Powers of Boston to Joseph Davis for "1 fortnight's use and damage of six bamboo chairs" and the "use and damage of six bamboo chairs 16 days."³ In spite of its utilitarian aspects, the chair itself exhibits considerable grace in the rake, flare, and contour of its back and in the delicacy of its spindles.

TSM

1. *Eaton v. Seaver*, Suffolk County Court of Common Pleas (July 1804), case 68.
2. *Cook v. Leonard and Morse*, Suffolk County Court of Common Pleas (April 1810), case 644.
3. *Powers v. Davis*, Suffolk County Court of Common Pleas (April 1804), case 290.

WRITING-ARM WINDSOR CHAIR,
1785–1800
New London County, Connecticut
Maple; pine. $46\frac{1}{2} \times 37\frac{1}{2} \times 18\frac{1}{4} \times 17$ (seat
height)
Gift of Edward B. Aldrich. 41.124

Provenance:

Said to have belonged to the first (?) town clerk of Westerly, Rhode Island; descent unknown to the donor

Exhibition:

Rhode Island Tercentenary Exhibition, RISD, 1936

The practical combination of desk and chair was an American innovation introduced by Pennsylvania chairmakers around the third quarter of the 18th century. It is not surprising that such innovative grafts were applied to Windsor chairs, for they were a highly flexible type of furniture whose plank and spindle construction lent itself to multiple recombinations. The writing-arm is the most complicated form of Windsor chair, due to the extra struts and support it requires for stability. In addition, drawers and candle slides were frequently added for convenience below the arm and seat. Compared to a slant-front desk or a more conventional writing table, its function is much more specific, and yet its portability must have appealed to many writers as it enabled them to pursue heat and light around a room or a house.

Although this monumental chair is not marked, it resembles the signed work of Ebenezer Tracy of Lisbon, Connecticut, and his three chairmaking sons, Elijah, Ebenezer, Jr., and Frederick. The Tracy family and their apprentices were prolific craftsmen who dominated the production of Windsor chairs in New London County for two generations following the Revolutionary War.¹ Their few surviving accounts demonstrate that they made every sort of Windsor seating furniture, of which several hundred signed and attributed chairs have been recorded. They did not specialize in writing-arm chairs, and yet more examples by them are known than by any other American Windsor chairmaker.² The scale of their business is confirmed by the inventory of Tracy's estate, which contained 6400 "chair rounds" and 277 "chair bottoms."³ The features that this chair has in common with the branded examples include its tall comb back with blunt, upturned ends, bulbous turnings below the arm, the absence of an incised line around the



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seat edge, and the pattern of vase and baluster turnings on the legs and arm supports.

According to tradition, this chair belonged to the first town clerk of Westerly, Rhode Island (bordering New London County), a likely profession for an owner of a writing-arm chair. The first clerk, however, was appointed in 1669, which predates the Windsor style altogether. Other clerks were appointed in 1790 and in 1807, although no connection between them and this chair has yet been established.

TSM

1. Nancy Goynes Evans, "The Tracy Chairmakers Identified," *The Connecticut Antiquarian*, v. 33 (December 1981), pp. 14–21.
2. For related examples, see Kane 1976, no. 173; Fales 1976, p. 85; Sotheby Parke-Bernet sale 3638 (May 10–11, 1974), lot 471; *Antiques*, v. 104 (September 1973), p. 364; *Antiques*, v. 98 (September 1970), p. 347.
3. "Connecticut Cabinetmakers Part II: Checklist up to 1820," *The Connecticut Historical Society Bulletin*, v. 33 (January 1968), p. 25.



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LOW-BACK WRITING-ARM WINDSOR
CHAIR, 1791–1800

Anthony Steel (fl. 1791–1817)
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Maple, pine, oak, hickory, yellow-poplar.
30½ x 33⅓ x 26½ x 18 (seat height)
Museum Appropriation. 31.341

Provenance:

Morris Schwartz, Hartford, Connecticut,
before 1928; Arthur Leslie Green,
Newport, Rhode Island, from whom
purchased in 1931 for \$750

Publications:

Nutting 1928, no. 2628; Santore 1981, p.
140, fig. 171.

Exhibition:

Old State House, Newport, Rhode
Island, September 1933.

Condition:

Refinished shortly after its publication
by Nutting, and stained brown.



Fig. 154a
Chairmaker's brand on underside of
seat.

A more conservative form of writing-arm Windsor is this low-back chair made by Anthony Steel of Philadelphia. The spindles are left plain and the writing arm is more compact than on the preceding Connecticut writing-arm chair, which makes its overall appearance less animated. Nevertheless, the design of the arm supports extending from two projections of the seat demonstrates considerable ingenuity. The carved handrest also makes a stronger counterpoint to the writing paddle than the more typical handrests that scroll horizontally in the same plane.

Other details set this chair apart from simpler models by the same maker.¹ For convenient storage of writing implements or other small desk accessories, Steel provided three drawers of different sizes that emerge at different angles and levels, each fitted with a lock. The front of the drawer below the writing arm conforms neatly with the curve of the board above it, and a smaller drawer hangs from runners attached to its bottom.

The underside of the poplar seat is branded "A. STEEL" (fig. a). Anthony Steel was a prolific Windsor chairmaker whose branded work includes numerous chairs and settees in various Windsor styles. His name appears in Philadelphia directories as chairmaker and Windsor chairmaker at several addresses on South Wharves, Spruce Street, Little Dock Street, and South Second Street between 1796 and 1817.

TSM

1. See Goyne 1969, p. 538, fig. 2.



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CHILD'S COMB-BACK WINDSOR
ARMCHAIR, 1760–1800
New England
Ash, maple, pine. $27\frac{1}{2} \times 14\frac{1}{2} \times$
 $10\frac{1}{2} \times 8\frac{3}{4}$ (seat height)
Gift of Mrs. Henry G. Vaughan. 44.519.5

Provenance:

Acquired by the donor in the early 20th century for Hamilton House, the Vaughan summer residence in South Berwick, Maine

Publications:

Cooper 1980, p. 186, fig. 201; Santore 1981, p. 161, fig. 203.

Condition:

The green paint is old but covers the original coat of red paint. The legs have probably been cut down one or two inches.

Windsor highchairs for children are not uncommon (see cats. 156–58), although small comb-back chairs like this one are.

This chair is a particularly fine example of the form. Its unusually tall comb back and shaped crest rail with prominent scrolled ears relate to full-sized Philadelphia armchairs (cat. 145), and yet the large scale of the legs and arm supports prevents this chair from being merely a miniature version of a larger chair (Santore 1981, p. 160). One playful detail is the way in which the ears of the crest rail are carved. The volutes do not scroll outward from the inner edge of the ear in the usual fashion. Instead, they scroll in the opposite direction.

Although this chair was probably made in New England, its resemblance to Philadelphia chairs makes clear that city's acknowledged domination of the Windsor chair market in the late 18th century. Philadelphia chairmakers shipped several thousand Windsor chairs to New England ports (Gillingham 1931), so many that the name "Philadelphia chair" became synonymous with Windsor chairs.

TSM



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SACK-BACK WINDSOR HIGHCHAIR,
1770–1800
Connecticut or Rhode Island
Soft maple, chestnut, oak, ash, hickory.
 $34 \times 19 \times 16 \times 20$ (seat height)
Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke. 20.965

Provenance:

Arthur Leslie Green, Newport, Rhode Island, from whom purchased by the donor in 1917 for \$10

Publications:

Nutting 1917, pp. 96–97; Nutting 1928, no. 2516.

Exhibition:

Old State House, Newport, Rhode Island, September 1933.

Condition:

The present red paint covers old green paint.



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Fig. 156a
Ralph Earl, American, 1751–1801.
Portrait of Mrs. William Taylor and her Child
Daniel Boardman, 1790. Oil on canvas.
(Courtesy of the Albright-Knox Gallery)

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ROD-BACK WINDSOR HIGHCHAIR,
1800–20
New England
Pine, hickory. $35\frac{3}{4} \times 16 \times 15\frac{1}{2} \times 22$ (seat
height)
Gift of the Estate of Mrs. Gustav Radeke.
31.465

Provenance: Arthur Leslie Green,
Newport, Rhode Island, from whom
purchased by the donor

Exhibition:
Raid the Icebox with Andy Warhol, RISD,
1970, cat. 110.

158

WINDSOR HIGHCHAIR, 1830–50
Boston, Massachusetts
Eastern white pine, soft maple, birch,
aspen. $32\frac{3}{4} \times 17 \times 14 \times 21\frac{1}{2}$ (seat height)
Museum Works of Art Miscellaneous
Fund. 43.580

Provenance:
Purchased from the Handicraft Club,
Providence, Rhode Island

Highchairs present a different kind of design challenge than simply reducing the scale of an adult's chair in order to create a child's chair. They require the chairmaker to provide a tall seat that nevertheless insures stability, and to compress the upper portion of the chair while at the same time extending the lower portion. Highchairs were a common and popular form of children's furniture, although they occasionally also served adults in special circumstances, such as schoolmasters and church organists.¹

A chronological survey of Windsor highchairs mirrors many of the stylistic changes that took place within the Windsor chairmaking trade in general. The earliest chair in this group, a sack-back armchair painted red, exhibits several traits associated with chairs made in Connecticut and Rhode Island, notably the tapered legs below the stretchers and the slight swelling of the back spindles. The vase turnings in the central portion of the leg are attenuated and allow for the addition of the foot rest at the strongest point. A contemporary portrait by Ralph Earl depicts a Connecticut child in a similar highchair (fig. a).

Like its adult counterparts (cat. 152), the rod-back highchair with bamboo turnings retains few stylistic traits of any particular region. Bamboo turnings were well suited to infinite repetition and required little rethinking by the designer before applying them to a highchair. In this instance, the insertion of the footrest occurs at one of the bamboo turnings, the weakest point of the leg, and as a result, the leg has been badly split.

By the mid-19th century when the most recent variant was made, the Windsor chairmaking tradition had waned considerably in the face of competition from other factory-produced furniture. The crude plank seat and crest rail of cat. 158 indicate a much later date than the traditionally shaped and contoured seats of the preceding Windsor chairs. The bamboo turnings, here only suggested by painted rings but not actually incised, do not bulge in the manner of bamboo, a material that was no less popular for furniture in the 19th century (see cat. 141) but more likely to be imported directly than imitated. The grapevine decoration painted on the crest rail also reflects the impact of design handbooks and mass-produced stencils published for amateurs and hobbyists.

TSM

1. See Rhode Island Historical Society *Collections*, v. 21 (July 1928), p. 92.

159

CRADLE, 1650–1700
Southeastern Massachusetts
Oak, pine, maple. 32 1/8 x 16 1/2 (case); 27 (rockers) x 34 3/4
Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke. 21.243

Provenance:

Said to have been found in Abington, Massachusetts around 1920; Brooks Reed, Boston; Wallace Nutting, from whom purchased by the donor

Publications:

Nutting 1921, p. 317; Nutting 1928, no. 1567; Kettell 1929, p. 217; Banks 1932, p. 27; Casey 1932, p. 5.

Condition:

Only a fragment remains of a board that probably covered the top of the hood, and the top of the back board has been reshaped. One spindle is missing from the left side of the hood. Both rockers are probably early replacements. The bottom boards are also replaced. The word "Nahum" has been scratched on the left side panel.

Fewer than a dozen cradles are known to have survived from 17th-century New England. Of the one wicker and several wooden examples documented, at least six have histories of ownership in Plymouth County.¹ Perhaps inspired by the Noyes family cradle displayed at Pilgrim Hall since the 1850s or the Fuller family cradle displayed in Philadelphia at the Centennial Exhibition of 1876, antiquarians have preserved cradles as Pilgrim relics, revered like "Carver" and "Brewster" chairs for their associations with the first Pilgrim families.² This joined cradle has unfortunately lost its family association, although it was probably exceptional even in its own time, since few parents could afford the expense of joinery, particularly for furniture whose function was so specific and whose immediate utility was relatively short-lived.

Early probate records contain surprisingly few references to cradles, wooden, wicker or otherwise. They are more likely to have been passed on to married daughters or to expectant sons before their parents' deaths, and thus would not appear in the parents' estates. Many cradles also may have been simple boxes that had little monetary value. By the 19th century, open-sided cradles or ones made of wicker or rattan were believed to be more hygienic, and many old cradles were probably discarded then.

Contemporary Dutch genre paintings and prints frequently depict wicker cradles near the hearth and draped with fabric over the hood to retain the warmth.³ A 1675 inventory reference to "one cradle rugg, and cradle pillows" in a Roxbury estate provides additional evidence of expensive textiles specifically made for cradles (Cummings 1964, p. 8). In addition, the practice of swaddling, or binding the body and limbs of an infant with linen tape, kept infants warm, obviously made supervision more easy, and at the same time inculcated Calvinist notions of restraint from earliest childhood. After four months, however, mothers were advised "to let loose the arms but still roul the breast and belly and feet to keep out cold air for a year."⁴

Infants without cradles slept together with their parents or with older siblings. Occasionally, this arrangement met with disaster, as in the case of a Plymouth child "about halfe a yeer old" who was "found dead in the morning... lying in bed with Waitstill Elmes and Sarah Hatch, the child's sister." A court inquiry determined that "either it was stifled by lying on its face or accidentally over layed in the bed" (Demos 1970, p. 132).

Given the grim facts of infant mortality (approximately one in ten) and the hazards of childbirth (every fifth woman in the Plymouth Colony died from childbirth-related causes), it is not surprising that families who could afford to bought an elaborate cradle to display their offspring during congratulatory visits to the "borning" room and to house it thereafter, just as wealthy adults erected for themselves tall bedsteads with costly hangings. This joined cradle may be only the most distant descendant of the opulent cradles of state made for royal infants, but it was nevertheless an object of great prestige and status in the New World (Harrison 1971, pp. 24, 36).

In terms of its joinery, moldings, and turned work, the 159D cradle stands among the more elaborate American examples, even without its hood covering. The gallery of turned spools and railings along the top of the sides and foot relate to the Thacher and Hinckley family cradles, both of which have elaborate arched hoods with multiple panels and spindles (Jobe and Kaye 1984, pp. 435–37). A remnant of the pine top on this cradle indicates that it once had a solid top with a slight pitch, thus resembling the lines of the Noyes cradle and the construction of the Fuller cradle. Nutting claimed that this and the Cushman family cradle were found in



Abington, where the Noyes cradle had also been recovered in the 19th century. Although no joiners are known to have worked in Abington in the 17th century, other cradles made in nearby Duxbury, Plymouth, and Yarmouth attest to the number of joiners working in Plymouth County who could meet the needs of prosperous yeomen.

The cyma curves at the top of the headboard are inconsistent with 17th-century taste and suggest an 18th-century modification. The exposed mortise of the left hood support is further evidence of an early recutting, which would also account for its curious shape. This cradle's generally low proportions and the use of a single pine panel for each side are also unusual features; with the exception of the Fuller cradle, the others have one or more stiles on each side. The spindles of the hood may also be early replacements, since their attenu-

ation and style of turning seem slightly at odds with the other turnings. It is possible that they were salvaged from an old chair or from a meetinghouse pew door, which typically had a row of attenuated spindles across the top. Many pew doors were removed in the course of the 19th century, and other instances of pew spindles being reused to repair turned chairs from Plymouth are known.⁵

TSM

1. Cradles with Plymouth County histories include the Fuller and Peregrine White cradles at Pilgrim Hall (see Fairbanks and Trent 1982, II, no. 341; St. George 1979, p. 46); the Cushman cradles at the Wadsworth Atheneum (Nutting 1928, no. 1564); the Hinckley cradle (St. George 1979, p. 54); and the Thacher

cradle at SPNEA (Jobe and Kaye 1984, no. 136).

2. The Fuller cradle was engraved as early as 1851 for the guidebook by William S. Russell, *Pilgrim Memorials and Guide for Visitors to Plymouth Villages* (Boston: C.C.P. Moody, 1851). The Old Colony Club, founded in 1769 by Pilgrim descendants, also brought together "venerable" relics such as furniture for their meetings (see Russell, p. 94). For cradles and the Centennial Exposition, see Roth 1964, pp. 60, 65.
3. See Durantini 1983 and Stone-Ferrier 1983.
4. Cited in St. George 1982, p. 179.
5. Benes and Zimmerman 1979, pp. 47–52, cats. 91–93. For reused spindles, see Pizer et al. 1985, p. 1115, fig. 4.

CRADLE, 1820–30

Possibly Pennsylvania

Eastern white pine, basswood, with
stenciled and freehand decoration. 21¾
x 14 (case); 21⅛ (rockers) x 34

Gift of Mrs. Henry G. Vaughan. 44.519

Provenance:

Acquired by the donor in the early 20th
century for Hamilton House, the
Vaughan summer residence in South
Berwick, Maine

Condition:

The cradle retains most of its original
decoration. Aside from the usual signs
of wear in the vicinity of the rockers, the
rounded profile of the footboard has
been broken off, eliminating some of the
decoration in that area.

In contrast to the preceding cradle, this
example was put together by a carpenter,
rather than a joiner or cabinetmaker,
being secured almost entirely by screws
and square cut nails; only the rockers
have been further stabilized by the intro-
duction of a chamfered cross stretcher
tenoned through each of them. In addi-
tion, the enclosed hood or bonnet has
now been eliminated, save for the
quarter-round "ears" which connect the
headboard with the sides. While this
latter arrangement became a familiar
feature of later cradle design, the same
apparently cannot be said for the poly-

chrome decoration which considerably
enhances the yellow painted surface of
the RISD cradle.¹

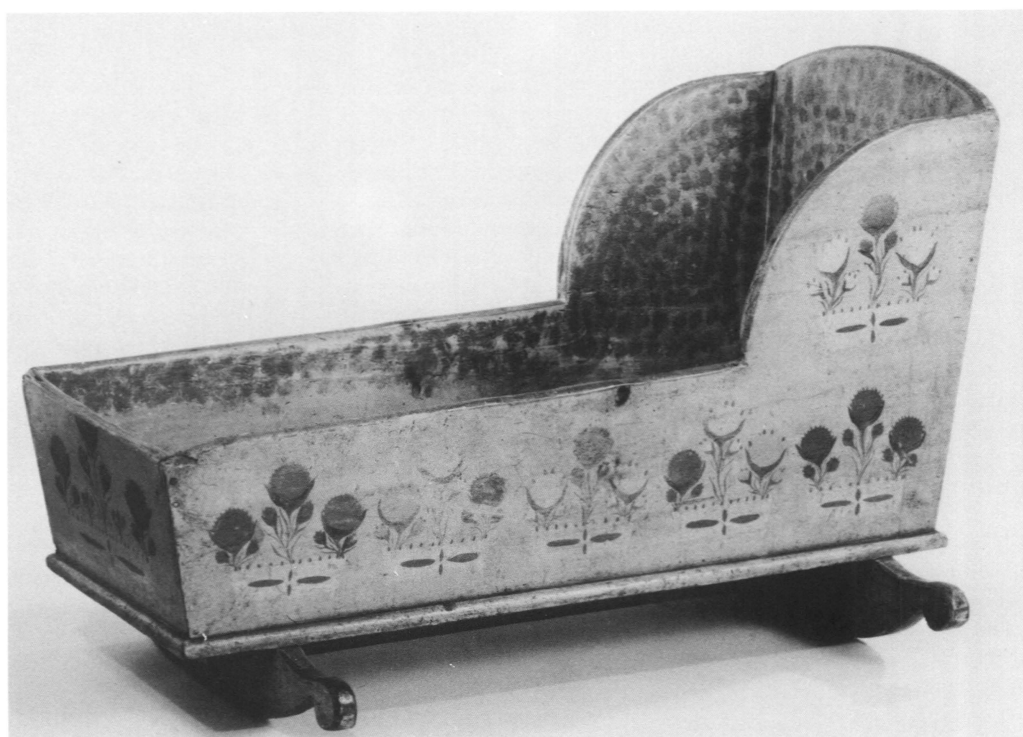
The red, white, and yellow flowers
which make up the decoration are
arranged in groups of three to a box or
planter, several of which appear on each
side of the cradle's exterior. The back of
the headboard also incorporates a
flowering tree (fig. a). On the cradle's
interior, large red dots animate the
yellow painted surface, but only on those
areas where they would not be covered
up by bedding. As the decoration is
somewhat reminiscent of that found on
Pennsylvania-German frakturs, of which
the donor was also an active collector,
Pennsylvania may have been the place of
origin of this cradle.²

CPM

1. In the course of trying to determine the regional source of the decoration, the writer contacted Doris Fry, curator of the Museum of the Historical Society of Early American Decoration, Inc., along with other authorities on American painted furniture, including Edwin Churchill, Dean Fales, Monroe Fabian and Sumpter Priddy. Alas, none of them had ever encountered similar work.
2. As part of her gift to the RISD Museum in 1944, Mrs. Vaughan included three Pennsylvania-German frakturs.



Fig. 160a



BEDSTEAD, 1760–70/1890–1900/1906
Possibly Newport, Rhode Island
Mahogany. 67¼ x 57 x 75¾
Bequest of Charles L. Pendleton. 04.112

Publications:

Lockwood 1904, p. 93; Lockwood 1921, v. 2, p. 255; Salomonsky 1931, pl. 95; Carpenter 1954, p. 27; Comstock 1962, pl. 235; Margon 1965, p. 60.

Exhibition:

Hunter House Loan Exhibition, Preservation Society of Newport County, 1953.

Condition:

Only the two mahogany footposts are original.

In the 1782 inventory of Capt. John Peck Rathbun of South Kingston, Rhode Island, appears one of the earliest references to the use of fluting on Rhode Island furniture. It is of particular interest here because the fluting occurred on beds, including one with claw-and-ball feet:

- 1 mahogany bedstead fluted with claw feet & sacking bottom £6
- 1 d[itt]o with square feet & sacking bottom £4
- 1 d[itt]o small d[itt]o £2

This inventory indicates that a bed comparable to the one at RISD represented the most expensive type, with its claw-and-ball feet adding two pounds to the cost of one with square Marlborough feet. Furthermore, the bed hangings for the two high-post beds were included in the inventory. Not only do their descriptions confirm the well-known fact that bed hangings contributed far more to the total cost of a bed than its wooden frame, but also that the more expensive bed with claw-and-ball feet called for more expensive hangings, at least in Capt. Rathbun's household. The claw-and-ball footed bed was hung with "1 suit of Pompedore (sic) Curtains and spread with tostles (sic) £15," while the square footed bed had "1 suit of furniture chex do £7–10." "Pompedore Curtains," obviously named for Madame de Pompadour, suggest something very stylish indeed, while a "suit of furniture chex" indicates a set of hangings in a much more common checked textile.¹

Aside from the RISD bed, at least five other beds with claw-and-ball feet have been published as coming from Rhode Island.² While they all have fluted posts, only the one formerly in the George Palmer collection has stop-fluted ones



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like RISD's. But even the Palmer posts do not incorporate the distinctive features found on the RISD posts, in which the stop fluting begins a couple of inches after the fluting has already commenced, and then extends about halfway up the fluted portion of the posts (fig. a). In addition, the fluted posts are intersected by rings or collars about three-quarters of the way up. The posts which most closely resemble RISD's are not, in fact, found on a bed associated with Newport, but rather Salem, Massachusetts. It was formerly in the Lindens and now at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (Christie's sale 5262 [January 22, 1983], lot 353) and has fluted posts in which the stop fluting again begins about an inch after the commencement of the fluting. But the stop flutes on the Salem bed then extend most of the way up the fluted portion of the posts, and are not intersected by collars or rings. While its claw-and-ball feet are carved with acanthus

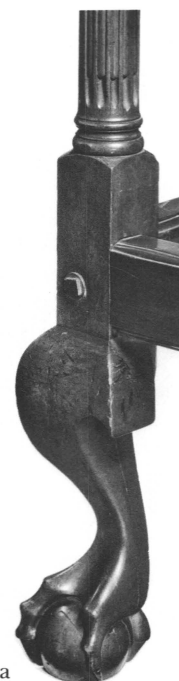


Fig. 161a

leaves against a star-punched and stippled ground characteristic of Salem, and RISD's are perfectly plain, the bold proportions of the latter and the treatment of the talons also bring to mind coastal Essex County.

Unfortunately there are no secondary woods to throw further light on the RISD bed's place of origin, because the mahogany footposts are the only original elements. The rest of the bed has been made up from old and new parts which were then given a mahogany stain to cover up the discrepancies. As the headposts have been extended, they probably were first used on a field bed which invariably requires shorter posts.

Pendleton made no attempt to recreate the 18th-century hangings when he installed the bed in his home at 72 Waterman Street, perhaps because there was so little original evidence to work from. Even a close examination of the footposts reveals no holes for the insertion of cloak pins or tiebacks upon which to festoon the curtains, as shown in Chippendale's *Director* (1762, pls. 41, 42, and 44). While this treatment was used on American beds, the curtains on the RISD bed must have always hung in straight folds from a flat tester rail (Heckscher 1985, pp. 151–52).

After the bed was reinstalled in the Museum's Pendleton House, its stark appearance proved unacceptable, and Mrs. Gustav Radeke, as head of the furnishings committee, set out to rectify the matter. Under the influence of both the Colonial Revival and Arts and Crafts movements, she opted for a serpentine "sweep" or tester frame with urn finials derived from Hepplewhite's *Guide* (1794, pls. 102 and 104), although stylistically at least twenty years too late for the bed. Then she commissioned the Hingham Society of Arts and Crafts in 1906 to make a set of netted bed hangings for it, even though there is no historical precedent for such a treatment before the 1880s.³ At that time it became fashionable to cover ceilings with fish nets, as seen in the Samuel Tilton house dining room designed by McKim, Mead & White in Newport in 1881–82 (Downing and Scully 1952, pl. 202). Very soon thereafter, this ceiling treatment was adopted for bed canopies, assisted by the Arts and Crafts-inspired enthusiasm for needlework. As this was the first set of hangings made for the bed in its present form, it seemed appropriate to show the bed so curtained in an early installation photograph.

CPM

1. Capt. John Peck Rathbun's 1782 inventory, v. 6 (1772–1800), p. 135, Town of South Kingston (Rhode Island) Probate. It was previously thought that the earliest documentary reference for fluting on Rhode Island furniture was a bill from Townsend Goddard to Christopher Champlin dated June 9, 1787: "To a large maple bedstead fluted posts & bases – £2–8–0" (Heckscher 1980, p. 361). For Pompadour bed hangings, see Montgomery 1983, p. 326.
2. The five beds come from the following collections: (1) George Palmer (Ott 1965, pp. 134–35); (2) Chipstone (Rodriguez Roque 1984, pp. 408–9); (3) Newport Restoration Foundation (Moses 1984, p. 189); (4) French family, Bristol, Rhode Island (Hyman Kaufman collection part II, American Art Association sale 4193 [October 25–26, 1935], lot 213); and (5) Potter family, Kingston, Rhode Island (*Antiques*, v. 89 [February 1966], p. 204).
3. An extended correspondence between Mrs. Radeke and the Hingham Society of Arts and Crafts concerning the netted bed hangings exists in the RISD Museum archives.

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BEDSTEAD, ca. 1810
Probably Boston, Massachusetts
Mahogany with painted pine cornice;
pine. 98 x 57½ x 82
Given by Mrs. C. C. Febiger in memory
of Edith Waterman Richmond. 81.159

Provenance:

Purchased in 1927 by Edith Waterman Richmond, the mother of the donor, in Quincy, Massachusetts

Publication:

Museum Notes, RISD, 1982, p. 15.

Condition:

The cornice was restored in the late 1920s based on the Elizabeth Derby bedstead at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

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BEDSTEAD, 1810–15
Providence, Rhode Island
Mahogany; cherry. 99 x 66 x 81
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Frank Mauran.
80.281.

Provenance:

Edward Carrington or Sullivan Dorr, by descent to Frank Mauran, Providence

Publications:

Ott 1965, pp. 136–37; *Museum Notes*, RISD, 1981, p. 15; *Museum Handbook*, RISD, 1985, p. 321.

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CORNICE ORNAMENTS, 1800–20
Salem, Massachusetts
Pine with gesso and gilt. 8½ x 7
Anonymous gift. 81.226.1–2

Provenance:

Owned by Ben: Perley Poore (1820–1887) at Indian Hill, West Newbury, Massachusetts, in the second half of the 19th century; purchased by the donor at the auction of the contents of Indian Hill, held on June 2, 1979, at Iron Rail Hall, Wenham, Massachusetts

Publication:

Museum Notes, RISD, 1982, p. 14.

This impressive four-post bedstead (cat. 162) with its distinctive cornice was purchased by the donor's mother, Mrs. Ralph Richmond, "from a little old lady in Quincy, Mass. in 1927."¹ Such a provenance suggests that the bed was made in nearby Boston, and this possibility is reinforced by comparing it with



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Fig. 162a



Fig. 163b
Corner of dressing room, Carrington house. (RISD Museum archives)



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Fig. 163a



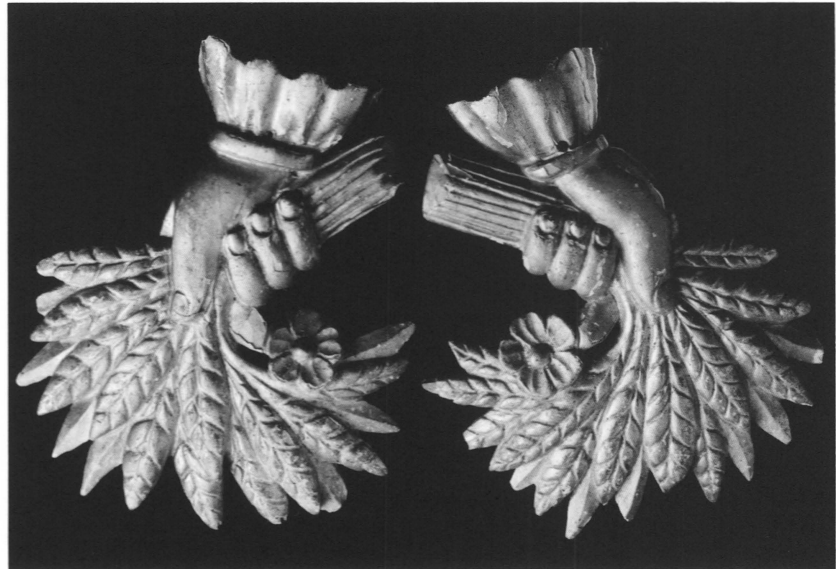
Fig. 163c
Festooned bed hangings, Boston, 1827, in the Colonel Black House, Ellsworth, Maine. (Courtesy of *The Magazine Antiques*)

the Elizabeth Derby bed from Oak Hill, since 1923 on exhibit at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (Randall 1965, pp. 258–59). In fact, Mrs. Richmond studied that example in some detail after she acquired her bed. Her cornice frame had disappeared, and she was left with only some of the decorative elements, including the spears from the sides, and the bow from the foot of the bed. As the Derby bed's cornice is intact, and so close in appearance to the Richmond bed, it served as the model for the restoration of the latter's cornice.² Not only did that include the frame, but also the gilded urn finials. The crossed quiver and torch attached to the bow on the Derby cornice, however, did not get reproduced, although there is evidence for it originally on the Richmond bed.

As bed cornices are fragile, and often the victims of changing taste, relatively few have survived, and of those designed along the lines of the Derby and Richmond beds, only three others are known (Essex Institute, SPNEA, and Winterthur). All three cornices are probably based on a design for a "French Rod" in Thomas Sheraton's *Cabinet Directory* of 1803 (plate 43), except that he used a laurel wreath instead of the crossed quiver and torch (Montgomery 1966, p. 60). It is generally considered that this particular choice of subject was intended to honor a new bride; in the case of Elizabeth Derby it was an ironic choice because her marriage to Captain Nathaniel West had already ended in divorce.

An account in the ledger of John Doggett, the mirrmaker of Roxbury, suggests that the Derby cornice was assembled by the Boston upholsterer William Lemon, while Doggett executed the painted decoration: "Nov. 23, 1808/ William Lemon/To Gilding Bed Cornice/ Bow Darts Quivers Arrows \$16."³ While the very same combination of craftsmen may have made the Richmond cornice and that at Winterthur, there were many other craftsmen in the vicinity of Boston at the time capable of doing such work.⁴ Furthermore, tack holes on the back of the Richmond spears indicate that they originally supported a swagged drapery treatment similar to that reproduced on the bed at Winterthur (Montgomery 1966, p. 61), except that arrows have been substituted for spears on the sides of its cornice, as is also the case on the Derby bed.

While the present set of white dimity hangings on the Richmond bed dates from the late 1920s, similar examples were used in the early 19th century, especially in "White Chambers" and for



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Fig. 164a
Photograph of parlor at Indian Hill, West Newbury, ca. 1870. (Courtesy of the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities, Boston)

summertime use in general. However, the "White Chamber" in James De Wolf's house, The Mount, in Bristol, Rhode Island, undoubtedly shows how much more fully curtained the Richmond bed would have been originally (fig. 127a). Indeed, there is a document for one bed which required fifty-six yards of material (Montgomery 1966, p. 56). But the present arrangement has the advantage of showing more of the exceptional turnings and carving on the footposts, which like those on the Newport bed (cat. 161) continued to serve as the bed's focal point, with the headboard and headposts still treated in a summary fashion.

Although the design of the posts for all three beds seems to derive in general from the plates found in Thomas Sheraton's pattern books, there is still a significant degree of variation among them in the handling and the placement of the turnings and carving. For example, the vase-shaped turnings of the Derby bed incorporate lyre forms with acanthus frames, while the vase-shaped turnings on the Richmond bed incorporate Gothic ogee arches with ball frames (fig. 162a). Despite these differences in the use of motifs, the quality of the carving is very similar in terms of its depth and crispness. Such features are characteristic of the carving found on documented Boston furniture. In addition, a bill in the Derby papers indicating that the posts for the Elizabeth Derby bed may have come from the well-known Boston cabinetmaking firm of Vose & Coates serves as further evidence for the Derby and Richmond beds originating in Boston.⁵

As for the source of the ogee arch found on the Richmond footposts, it does not appear to derive from Sheraton. Yet the ogee arch is found on at least a dozen other similar beds, including another associated with the Derby family at the Metropolitan Museum. Perhaps it derives from an earlier pattern book, such as Batty Langley's *Gothic Architecture Improved by Rules*, first published in London in 1741. That architectural pattern book was still being consulted in the early 19th century by the Rhode Island architect John Holden Greene in the course of designing and building several houses in Bristol, not to mention houses and churches in Providence, including the Sullivan Dorr house of 1810.⁶ And to tie the design of architecture and furniture more closely together, one of the dozen other beds incorporating the Gothic ogee arch may have been made for the Sullivan Dorr house, and is now at RISD through the generosity of

Mr. and Mrs. Frank Mauran (cat. 163).

The history of the Mauran bed is hardly straightforward. Although it spent much of its life in the Providence home of the great China Trade merchant Edward Carrington, there is also the possibility it was owned by another prominent Providence merchant, Sullivan Dorr. Unfortunately, it has thus far been impossible to find a specific reference to the bed in their extensively interrelated family papers (Ott 1965, p. 136). If owned by Carrington, the bed would have been acquired at the time he bought his house at 66 Williams Street in 1812; it would have been bought a couple of years earlier if owned by Sullivan Dorr, who moved into his house at 109 Benefit Street in 1810.

While the Mauran bed has Gothic ogee arches carved on the urns of its footposts, as do the Richmond and ten other beds, it also incorporates decorative details which they lack (fig. 163a).⁷ The Mauran urns sit on drums carved with a classical swag and tassel motif in low relief. In turn the urns support inverted cups rising from concave ribbing. The cups are carved with a swag and tassel motif which repeats that found on the drum. Of the eleven other beds having the Gothic ogee arch, only three of them have the swag and tassel motif carved on the inverted cup, and none of them have it on the drum. Furthermore, two of the three with the swag and tassel carving also have histories of ownership in Providence; the third is at Bayou Bend.⁸ As the design of the footpost is so similar on all four beds, not to mention the bold execution of the carving which is quite different from Boston workmanship, it is more than likely that they were all made in Providence, and that their footposts were turned and carved in the same unidentified shop or shops.⁹

Unique to the Mauran bed is the use of ivory, which further supports the theory that these four beds were made in Providence. Not only does its decorative application occur more often on documented Providence furniture, including three other examples at RISD (cats. 13, 14, 35), but the prominent Providence cabinetmaker Thomas Howard advertised in 1812 that he had for sale "600 Ivory knobs, on a new and improved Plan, warranted" (Garrett 1966, p. 517). In addition, Providence could count among its many talented craftsmen Isaac Greenwood, who as a specialist in ivory turning doubtless expedited the process. Ivory on the Mauran bed is used to conceal the metal casters attached to the feet, and the bed bolts where the rails

join the posts, as well as to cap the footposts.

The other feature of the Mauran bed to be considered is the carved, gessoed, and gilded cornice, consisting of Prince of Wales feathers in the corners, and cornucopias of fruit at the center of the rails from which drapery swags are suspended in an arrangement known as "festooning." The fact that additional Prince of Wales feathers and cornucopias accompany the bed suggests that they were used on the windows of the same room in keeping with the dictum for bedrooms that "the bed-curtains and window curtains should of course be of the same material, and corresponding in form."¹⁰ Early 20th-century interior photographs of Carrington house confirm this arrangement (fig. 163b). While the present hangings on the Mauran bed copy a set dating from the 1930s, the room which contained the bed in Carrington house was known as the "Toile de Jouy room," suggesting that a quite different material was used at an earlier date for the bed and window hangings. The least altered example of festooned bedhangings known to the writer is found in the Colonel John Black house in Ellsworth, Maine, where they have remained undisturbed since 1827, having been sent there that year from Boston (fig. 163c).¹¹

Another possible treatment for a bed cornice *en suite* with a set of window cornices can be seen in a set of carved, gessoed, and gilded hands clasping sheaves of wheat (cat. 164). The pair illustrated here is one of two at RISD, while others from the set are in a private collection. This particular motif was favored in Salem, Massachusetts, and three diminutive carved and gilded sheaves of wheat appear on the cornice of a bed in the Essex Institute, for which a bill survives showing they were made by Jacob Sanderson of Salem:

Mr. Aaron Waitt to Jacob Sanderson Dr. 1807 March 5 to Bed	
Cornish	\$4.00
to Painting & Gilding said	
Cornish	\$4.25
June to pd. for 3 carved Sheeves	
wheet and guelding the same	
after the two above charges	\$3.50
on same	\$11.75
Rec'd payment Jacob Sanderson ¹²	

As the RISD cornice decorations were owned near Salem by the pioneer collector of American antiques, Ben: Perley Poore, it is more than likely that

he acquired them locally. A photographic view of the 1870s shows them hung above the windows in the parlor of his country estate, Indian Hill, in West Newbury (fig. 164a). Although they have a rather makeshift appearance in this later 19th-century context, their use at the windows seems to confirm their original role as cornice ornaments.

CPM

1. This information is contained in a letter from the donor, Mrs. C. C. Febiger, to the writer dated December 1980.
2. At that time the arrows along the sides of the Derby cornice pointed (incorrectly) toward the headposts, and hence that same arrangement was reproduced in the design of the cornice for the Richmond bed.
3. Randall 1965, p. 258. Laura Sprague kindly brought to the writer's attention the fact that William Lemon sent an elaborate white and gold painted cornice with attached dimity drapery from Boston to Bath, Maine (then Massachusetts), in 1812 for the Hon. William King (Marion Jacques Smith, *General William King* [Camden, Maine: Down East Books, 1980], pp. 49–50).
4. For example, the Salem, Massachusetts carver, turner, and cabinetmaker, Joseph True, noted in his account book in 1812 "Carving Bow & arrow Cornice: for \$2.25" on two different occasions (Margaret Burke Clunie, "Joseph True and the Piece-work System in Salem," *Antiques*, v. 111 [May 1977], p. 1007).
5. Wendy Cooper, formerly Assistant Curator of American Decorative Arts, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, kindly gave this information to the writer based on her extensive research on the original furnishings of the Oak Hill rooms. See Cooper, "The Furniture and Furnishings of the Farm at Danvers," *MFA Bulletin*, v. 81 (1983), pp. 24–45.
6. Jordy and Monkhouse 1982, p. 11. Also, the influence of Batty Langley "Gothick" can be seen in Boston in the ca. 1808 design of a screen of Gothic ogee arches dividing the front drawing room of John Welles at 59 Summer Street in Boston (Nylander 1982, p. 1177).
7. Information on the eleven other beds which have come to light incorporating Gothic ogee arches in the design of their posts is kept on file in the Department of Decorative Arts at the RISD Museum.
8. The bed at Bayou Bend is illustrated in Warren 1975, p. 88; the two other beds were formerly in the Edward Carrington house on Williams Street and the Governor Arnold house on John Street, both in Providence.
9. William and Daniel Proud should be considered possible candidates as they frequently turned bed posts for Providence cabinetmakers, according to the William Proud account books at the Rhode Island Historical Society. The carver Charles H. Rossiter was held in sufficiently high regard in 1823 for the Providence cabinetmaker Rhodes G. Allen to advertise "elegant Mahogany Bedsteads, various patterns, carved by Rosseter (sic)" (Garrett 1966, p. 518).
10. Eliza Leslie, *The House Book or, A Manual of Domestic Economy* (Philadelphia, 1840), p. 307.
11. According to the unpublished research of Laura Sprague, the original bill specified 23 yards of silk-and-wool tassel fringe.
12. Essex Institute 1980, pp. 38–39.

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